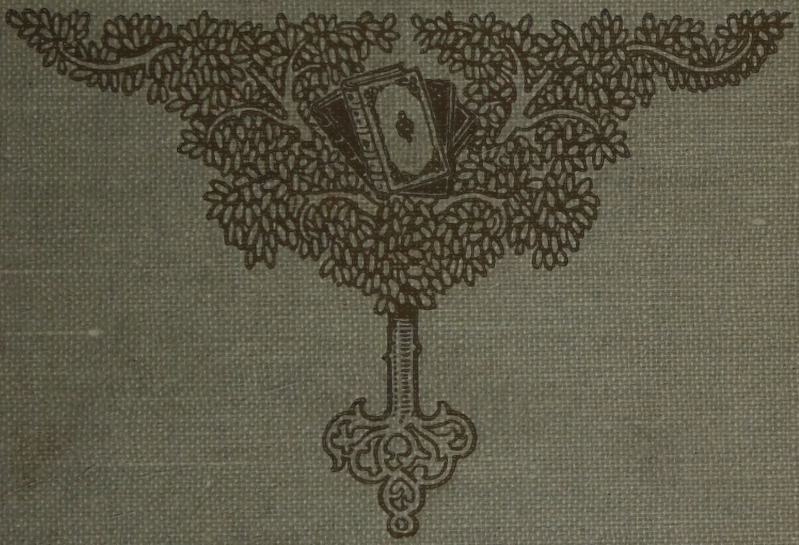
FOLLOWING THE KING

ALBERT D. BELDEN



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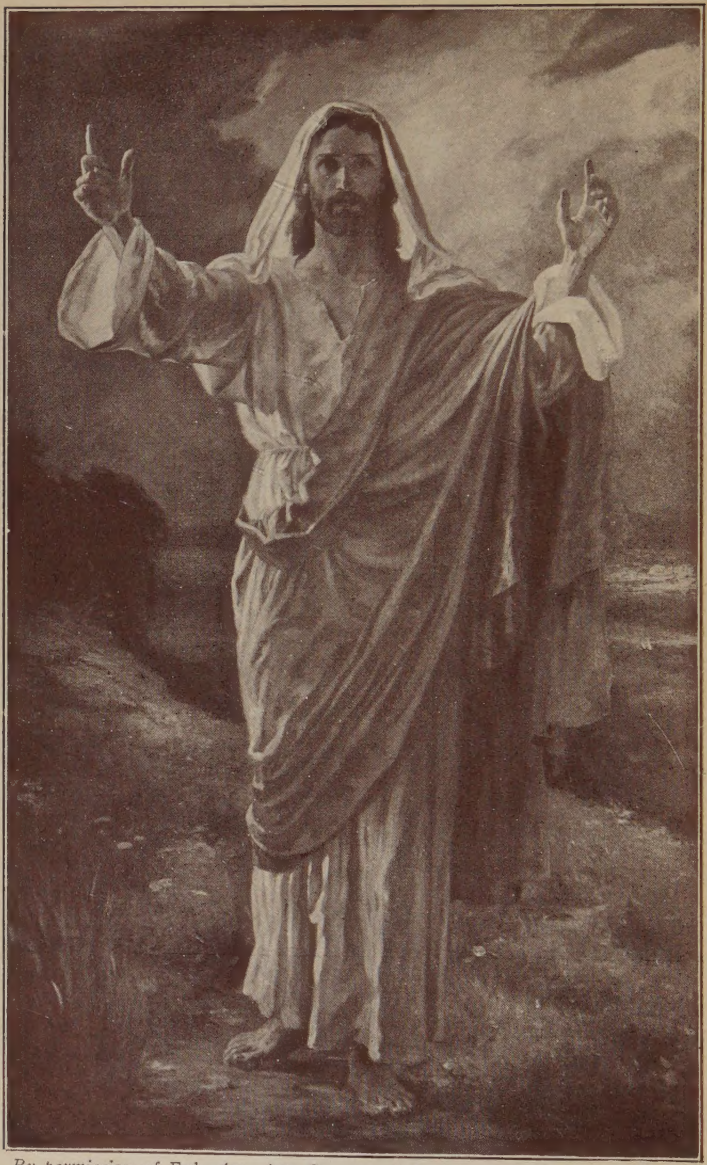

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THE CHRIST

Following the King

Bible Talks for Boys and Girls

By

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"The Way to Live," etc.

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I

COMMANDS OF THE KING

1

"I WILL"

(A NEW YEAR'S TALK)

A VERY happy New Year to you! I hope you will dip into this little book very often. I will do my best to make at least those moments of the New Year happy for you. Now, about this New Year. It is, let us say, the year 1940, or 1950, and if we were to describe it properly, we should call it "the Year of our Lord 1950." That would mean, of course, that it is 1,950 years since Jesus was born. All our years, you see, are numbered from His birthday, which shows us how precious to the world Jesus is.

But it is one thing to *call* 1950 "the Year of our Lord," and quite another thing *really* to make it so. If only we could make 1950 the Year of our Lord indeed, what a *happy* New Year it would be! For, of course, you remember how *happy* Jesus was. He was always talking about the bright things of life. In His great Sermon on the Mount He uses the words "blessed," or "happy," nine times over. Well, the subject of that Sermon is one that is important for all boys and girls: "How to be happy, though good." And then think of how Jesus

spoke concerning His joy. "These things I say unto you that *my joy* may be in you, and that your joy may be full." There is no doubt about this year being a *happy* New Year, if we can only give it into the control of Jesus. I have every confidence in your doing so, and I believe you will say from your heart the great words, "I will!"

These words bring to my remembrance a noble story I heard some years ago from the lips of a missionary friend. I pass it on to you.

One bright, starry night, a few years before the Great War, there might have been seen outside a little town in the far Soudan a strange little group of men. In the centre of a circle of black natives stood a tall, young, white missionary. For several weeks these natives had lived with this young man, and he had taught them all he could about the Lord Jesus Christ. They were men drawn from the fierce tribes of the great interior of Central Africa, where there are millions of people who have heard hardly the faintest echo of Christ's name, and know nothing of His teaching. Brave pioneer missionaries, very few in number, had got hold of these men, in the hope that they would take the Light of the Gospel deeper into the darkness of that unhappy land.

Now, it was the last night before their return across the desert to their various tribes. The young, white Christian talked to them solemnly of the great obedience that Jesus expects from

His disciples. He knew that these men, if they were going to be true to Jesus, might run even the risk of death and of torture. Many of the tribes are still cannibals; they feed on human flesh. Presently, he put to them one last question: "Which of you will promise to make Jesus King—King over your own heart and life, and King over the heart and life of your tribe?"

The solemn words fell clear and full upon the quiet circle of men waiting beneath the silver moonlight, with that vast land of cruelty and ignorance behind them. The missionary waited for a reply to his question. Presently a man raised his right arm high above him, and said in a clear voice, "Ina so!" which means "I will!" Then another, and another, and yet another cried, "Ina so!" ("I will") *until every man in that circle had promised.* With a voice broken with deep emotion, the missionary prayed God's blessing upon their new and brave resolution, and the little circle parted, never to be formed again, till those men meet in heaven to tell the story of their King-making. The next morning, those brave, black Christians disappeared one by one, group by group, into the Dark Land, to carry the Light to their own people.

What do you think of them, boys and girls? Fancy, such courage, such devotion to Jesus, after only a few weeks' teaching! How old are you? Ten, did you say? Five *years* at Sunday School? Well, then, are you a King-maker? Have you said, "I will!" yet to this question of

obeying Jesus? You will not have to face torture and death, thanks to the martyrs of other days. But that fact should make you all the more willing to deny yourself and conquer yourself, and be brave about "the right" amongst your chums, so that Jesus may really be "King," may really rule every moment of every day of every month of this New Year. That is the way to the happiest New Year.

Look at the next chapter. We will see what it is Jesus wants us to do.

2

LOVE GOD

(Matt. 22:37.)

ONCE upon a time Jesus was asked by a man, "What is the first, or greatest, commandment?" Jesus replied that the greatest and chief commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength."

It was a very old commandment. You will find it in the book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 6, verse 5). But the people had not been very successful in doing it, and, after all, the chief thing about a commandment is the doing of it, isn't it? It is not of much use being like the little boy who had a new ruler given to him, and who

hung it upon the wall, where he could see it all the time, and yet went on writing crookedly! It is easy enough to hang this commandment on the wall, but if our New Year is to be controlled by Jesus, we must "do His words."

Well, but how? Now, it is just here that you and I are better off than those people of long ago. Really to love any one, you must see and know him. How, then, can you love *God?*

It was to answer that very question that God sent His Son Jesus, so that we might see exactly what He, the great Invisible One, is like. You will remember that Jesus once said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." So that if we would love God, as we are commanded, we can do so best *by loving Jesus.* God showed Himself in Jesus, to win your love and mine, and the love of all the world. Now, when we really see what Jesus was like, how loving and merciful and kind and noble, we cannot help loving Him with all our heart. Tennyson, the great poet, said once—

> *"We needs must love the highest*
> *When we see it."*

And Jesus is the highest and noblest this world has ever seen. I wonder what you think about that?

Sometimes boys and girls see pictures of Jesus crucified. Terrible pictures they seem, too, with His dear head crowned with thorns, and the

cruel nails through His feet and hands. I have known little boys and girls afraid of "Jesus crucified." And sometimes, when they are older, they think of Jesus with His terrible wounds, and they feel that His religion must be a sad one, and that He comes to take away the brightness of life. Nothing could be further from the truth than that.

Let me tell you a story, which will help you to understand how really beautiful the wounds of Jesus are.

Little daughter climbed on to mother's knee and snuggled into her arms. "I love you, mother dear," she said. Then presently, "At least, I love your face and I love your eyes, mummie, but I don't love your hands!"

At this, mother looked at her hands with a sigh. They were indeed sad to behold. They were shrivelled and bent, and there was very little use in them.

"Would girlie like mother to tell her the story of these hands?" the mother asked gently.

"Why, is there a story about them?" cried little daughter. "Oh, do let me hear it!"

Then mother told her how years ago, she (little daughter) had aroused everybody in the house by fearful shrieks, and mother, flying upstairs, had discovered her girlie's little bed on fire, and had beaten out the flames with her hands, and so rescued her darling. Ever since, those loving hands had been almost useless.

There was a deep silence in the room when

mother's story was ended. Then little daughter raised the poor hands to her little lips, and said softly, "Oh, mother! I love your dear hands best of all!"

In the same way, boys and girls, if we recall how Jesus came by His wounds, they will become, not ugly, but beautiful in our sight.

"He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good."

His wounds are wounds of honor, made beautiful by the great love they prove. When we see how true this is, it gives us great courage, too. A young French soldier lying in hospital said, as he looked at a picture of Jesus crucified: "I do not feel my wounds when I look upon His."

So let the sight of Jesus wounded speak to you in future, not of sorrow and trouble and dolefulness, but of love and courage, and the beauty and joy of perfect unselfishness.

Remember, then, Jesus came by His wounds in His effort to show to us all what God is like. We know, therefore, from His love how great God's love is. Will you just quietly think about this? Say to yourself, "The love of Jesus for everybody is God's love for me. For me!" Wait quietly, and I am sure you will *feel* God's love stealing through your heart, filling you with a great happiness.

Then you will have no trouble over the other

part of this first commandment—" with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." You will love God in every possible way and with every power. You will try to please Him in all you *feel,* in all you *are,* in all you *think,* and in all you *do.*

If you love God, you will, of course, want to *do* things for Him. It is not enough simply to love Him in words. I remember hearing of a little boy, whose mother said to him: " You have told me you love me, but now let me see your love get into your legs and feet. Run upstairs and fetch my work-basket."

" Little children, let us love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth." Love God. It is the King's first command.

3

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

(John 15:12.)

IT is strange, is it not, to find Jesus *commanding* us to love one another? How is it possible to command love? Isn't love something that we either feel or do not feel, and cannot pretend about? So we often think; and yet the amount of *will* we put into loving does make a difference.

We like our friends to be loyal, don't we?

That is, we like them to love us, even when we are not as good as usual. Shakespeare, the greatest of poets, says:

> *" Love is not love, which alters*
> *When it alteration finds."*

If we admire loyalty, it means that we believe love is the better and stronger for some will-power behind it. So it is not so surprising that Jesus commands us to put strength and determination into loving one another.

Here is a story which will help you to remember this:

There was once a happy little family, Chris, Arthur, Harry and Mary, who lived in the country, and kept, with the aid of mother and father and Aunt Catherine, a beautiful garden. Their " earthly paradise," they called it, and they loved every flower that grew there.

But, like many brothers and sisters, they sometimes quarrelled; so, one Sunday afternoon, mother talked to them about the great love of Jesus, and how He commanded His disciples to love and forgive one another.

The children listened patiently, but at last Arthur, who was the eldest, asked his mother, " How can you *make* yourself love or forgive somebody, when you don't? Wouldn't it be only just pretending, mother? "

To Arthur's question, mother gave a peculiar reply. I wonder what you will think of it.

"Arthur, dear," she said, "we must obey Jesus, however we feel. If we act lovingly and forgivingly and are earnest in our desire to obey the Master, then we shall at last come to *feel* the love and forgiveness we are trying to show. Try it," she added, "and see what happens! *Do* first; *feel* afterwards."

Well, some days later a quarrel broke out in this happy little family. Harry upset little Chris very badly by taking some new toy-soldiers Chris had been given, and playing alone with them all the morning.

Chris was very, very angry and hurt, but he was a quaint, good-hearted little fellow. Presently Mary saw him go to the toy-cupboard and get out of it a brand-new lovely humming-top his uncle had given him. He was muttering to himself, and at first Mary couldn't catch the words. Presently, however, she heard: "Do's first, feel's aft'-wards."

The words puzzled her for a moment, but then she remembered mother's lesson. Up the stairs, pit-a-pat, went little Chris. Into the nursery he burst, still saying his motto to himself—"Do's first, feel's aft'-wards." He went straight up to Harry and thrust the humming-top into his hands, saying: "Mother said, 'Do's first, feel's aft'-wards.' You can play with my new top, Harry!"

You can guess how surprised Harry felt, and he was old enough too to be ashamed of his mean action of the morning. Presently, as the top

spun round, it seemed to be saying to them both, " Do's first, feel's aft'-wards."

" We must obey Jesus, however we feel." But obedience to Jesus is always worth while, and if, for His sake, we will try hard to love people who seem to us unlovely, very soon we shall find them changing, and becoming quite lovable. If Jesus loves them all, there must be something lovable about them, must there not?

Let us stand bravely by His command, and we shall find it easier and easier to obey. Every one of His commands is only meant to make us, and all the world, happier.

4

FORGIVE

(Luke 6 :37.)

THE chief trouble that we have in obeying our King's second command occurs with those folk who do us wrong. They hurt us so deeply that almost before we know it, if we are not very careful, we lose the beautiful divine love for others which Jesus wants us to have always, and for everybody.

Yet the teaching of our King is very plain. " If," He says, " ye love them that love ye, what do ye more than others? Do not even the heathen the same? "

You see, He wants our love to be more than ordinary. He commands us *to forgive.* And because this is the most difficult of His commands, it is the real test of our love and obedience.

I read once a beautiful story about this. Two little children, twins, named Dickie and Dorrie, seven years old, lived in a large house, standing in grounds by the sea. They were a very happy little couple all through school-time, but with the holidays their troubles used to begin. For then, home from boarding-school, would come their elder brother Jim.

Now Jim, I am sorry to say, did not treat them at all as a brother should, but became to them quite like that dreadful thing you meet in fairy stories, an ogre. He teased them so that their little lives were miserable, and they were only too glad when the holidays were over, and he went back to school.

On Sunday afternoon mother would give them one of her lovely Bible talks, for they lived too far to go to any Sunday School. On that special afternoon it was the story of Peter asking Jesus, "How often must I forgive my brother if he sin against me?" You can guess how Dickie and Dorrie pricked up their ears when they heard that. And when they heard Christ's reply, "Unto seventy times seven," they gave something like a gasp in chorus.

After the lesson was over, off to the garden they ran to talk it over. "I s'pose," said

Dorrie, "we must forgive Jim seventy times seven."

"It's an awful lot," said Dickie mournfully. "I don't see how we can do it."

"But we must," answered Dorrie, "Jesus says so."

"Yes, but how shall we know when we've done it?" cried Dickie. "It's such a lot, look!"

He had been working out the sum in the dust with his little cane.

"Look!" he cried, "it's 490 times!"

There was silence for a moment or two. Then, "I know what we'll do," said Dorrie, "we'll keep a book, and put in it every time we forgive him."

"Yes," exclaimed Dickie eagerly, "and then when it's 490, let him look out!"

It would take me too long to tell you of the many things that went into that book. It was a long record of Jim's unkindness, and against each item were the words, "We forgive him," "Dickie, Dorrie," and the figures 1, 2, 3, and so on.

One day, during his summer holiday, Jim went shooting with a new gun his father had given him. The twins followed on his track, as interested as he in his new toy. Jim did not notice them, and presently, following one of his shots, there was a shout and a shriek. Poor little Dickie lay on the edge of a ditch, with Dorrie bending over him. He had been shot.

Quickly Jim ran for help, and his father and the gardener carried the little fellow home.

There it was found that he had been tumbled over more by shock than by the shot, for a little book had saved him, and in its covers the shot was found flattened out, and sticking all the pages together.

Father pulled the pages open and then said, "Why, look, Jim, this is full of your name. What is it?" And they both read it together.

They called Dorrie, and through her tears she explained. How ashamed Jim felt! His father and mother both spoke to him very seriously, and then mother explained to the twins that seventy times seven meant "always"—not 490, but *countless* times.

You will be glad to hear that Jim turned over a new leaf from that moment, and became a real nice big brother to the twins from that day. So the "forgiveness" was worth while, wasn't it?

I wonder if you have tried forgiving people 490 times?

Because this is the hardest of our King's commands, the noblest saints in Christian history are those who have most perfectly obeyed it. Jesus does not ask us to do anything that He does not lead the way in doing. Do you remember how He prayed for His cruel murderers from the cross? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is also one of the greatest, because of his noble forgiveness of his foes. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," he prayed. And in our own day brave

Edith Cavell, just before she suffered death in the World War, uttered these noble words: "There must be no hatred nor bitterness in my heart against any one."

Do not be content, boys and girls, with less than perfect obedience to your King.

5

CHEER UP

(John 16:33.)

ONE of the happiest words of the Great War was that jolly little phrase: "Cheer up!" or, as the British soldiers put it, "Cheerio!"

How fond the soldiers were of it, and how little did they think that they were making use of a favorite command of Christ's! But you will remember that when the disciples were downhearted, He would say to them, "Be of good cheer," or, in other words, "Cheer up," or "Cheerio!"

Jesus could not bear to see His followers "in the dumps"; and yet so many people still think that happiness and religion don't go together. I wonder how many boys and girls imagine that to be good is to be dull and miserable! Yet there never was a happier person than Jesus. If you will look through His teaching, you will see how full it is of happy things—banquets and suppers, and merriment and dancing, and flow-

ers and birds. Indeed, He sometimes said very amusing things, such as when He pictured the Pharisee carefully straining his drink through a piece of gauze to catch any gnat that might be in it, and yet swallowing a great hairy camel, hump and all! How the crowd must have laughed at that comic idea!

No, Jesus wants His boys and girls to be the happiest in the world, and they should be so; for if we follow Him, our consciences will be at rest, and God's approval will brighten our hearts and beam out of our faces. It is peace with God which gives real happiness in the heart.

Try, then, boys and girls, to "cheer up," especially when the days are darkest. Any one can be happy when pleased; it takes a real Christian to be happy when miserable.

"It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life flows by like a song,
But the boy worth while
Is the one who will smile
When everything goes wrong."

Not long ago, a minister, passing a field, heard a terrible scream, and, rushing towards the sound, he found a boy of twelve years, whose right foot had been cut off above the ankle by a mowing machine. The little fellow was wonderfully brave, his chief anxiety being that the news should be broken gently to his dear mother. It was not till his mother had seen and known the worst that he gave way to his own feelings.

Afterwards the minister visited him in the hospital, and found him splendidly happy, in spite of his great hurt. "Everybody here is so kind to me," he said. He seemed to have the habit of looking on the bright side. One thing interested him greatly, and that was a little boy in the bed opposite, whose legs had both been broken under a cart; and it was in his loving sympathy for this boy that he seemed to forget his own trouble. When the minister pulled a present out of his pocket for him, the tears started into his eyes, and he explained that this was the third present he had received that day, whilst the poor little chap opposite had none. He begged the minister to do him a favor—to put the present back into his pocket, and take it across to the other little fellow, and give it to him. He wanted his little friend to feel that he, too, had been remembered.

This boy had learned the great secret of Jesus—that the way to be always cheerful is to think of others. The happy Christ "pleased not himself." And He says to you, "Cheer up."

Perhaps this is just one thing boys and girls are specially sent into this world to do. There are some things that they can do better than grown-up folk, and "being happy" is one of them. Some workmen were once mending some pipes beneath the pavement in a city street; suddenly they were all stopped at their work. One of the men had dropped a tool down one of

the pipes, and, try as he would, he could not get his great hand down to recover it. He looked helplessly round. No one could get on till this tool was obtained. Suddenly he saw a little girl on the pavement—such a little girl, but the smaller the better! He called to her and asked her kindly to put her tiny hand into the pipe and pick out the tool. It was done in the twinkling of an eye, and the big men started their work again.

And there are results! I wish you young folks could understand how your brightness lifts the weary old world along, and helps grown-up people to obey this command—"Cheer up!" It is not always easy for mother and father to be happy. They have many cares—all the care of you, for example. It is you who must be the sunbeams of the house.

Of course, the best way to obey this command is to remember the great love of God. If you really feel His love at your heart, you cannot but be happy. Some one has said that wherever Creation comes face to face with its Maker it bursts into song. How the birds sing! How happy all Nature is just now! And Christianity—the religion of the love of God—is the one religion that sings. Show yourselves real Christians, boys and girls. Sing and whistle! "Cheer up!" Jesus says.

May you be able to say that wonderful thing about God which the Psalmist says: "*Who is the health of my countenance and my God.*"

6

SWEAR NOT

(Matt. 5:34.)

THE word "swear" has a good and a bad meaning. Its good meaning is "to utter a solemn declaration," so our friend the dictionary will tell you. It means to pledge oneself in a very solemn way, as by using the name of God. "'As God is my witness,' I will do this or that."

Now, Jesus always thought more of the "spirit" of an action than even the action itself, and in this command, He was thinking of the way in which men would use the solemn name of God to make a vow, and then be careless as to its fulfilment. That, of course, is very wrong. The name of God must never be used lightly.

Thus we see how the word "swear" comes to have a bad meaning. People use language to give vent to their feelings; and so careless and hot-tempered people use the name of God, to show their impatience with anything that crosses them. Sadly enough, every language has its phrases of this kind. No Christian boy or girl, man or woman, should ever use them for that selfish and irreverent purpose.

Then, too, there is a step lower still for this unhappy word "swear"—the step down to

"bad language." You know what happens when fruit goes rotten or eggs go bad—why, we turn from them with disgust and loathing! What would you think of anybody who could enjoy their presence or sight? If you were not very angry with them for such horrible taste, you would think them half-witted and pity them deeply. So with *bad* words. They will fill you with disgust and loathing if you will remember they are *bad* and stand for *bad* things. They stand for the "rottenness" of the mind. Some are bad with *hate;* and hate, remember, is the opposite of God, Who is Love. Some are bad with *dirtiness,* and stand for unclean thoughts and actions, although many foolish people who swear are ignorant of the fact.

If you were to see a beautiful little child fall down in the mud, how quickly you would run to help wipe the foulness from its face and hands and clothes! Think that way when you hear a boy or girl swear, or when tempted yourself to do so. Think that way when you hear a man or woman swear.

No one who ever lived was so pure as Jesus, and He will not have any uncleanness of thought or word or deed in any of His followers. "Now ye are clean," He said once to His disciples, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." I wonder what "word" He was thinking of. Perhaps this commandment. Perhaps that other wonderful word of His, "Blessed are the *pure in heart,* for they shall see God."

A little boy of fourteen—small for his years—went out to work in a factory. The men about him were rough and wicked. They used dreadful language, unfit for him to hear. They drank and quarrelled.

One day they were teasing him, and telling him he wasn't good for much. Summoning all his courage, he turned on them and said: "There are several things I can do, small as I am, that you can't do."

"Oh," cried the men, "what are they?"

"Well," said the boy, "I can keep myself from swearing and drinking and fighting, anyhow."

And for some reason, perhaps just because he was such a little chap, or because they had sons like him at home, those big men were ashamed in their wickedness and answered him never a word.

Always stand up for purity and cleanness. I once heard a doctor say, that really the only thing, except for accidents, that people die from is *dirt*. The way of uncleanness is the way of death. Keep your bodies clean, and your souls as well, and life will be full and sweet and happy.

I read a funny story once of a little boy who was always washing his hands. A dozen times a day he would go to the faucet and let the water run over his well-soaped hands. This was so unusual for a boy, that his elder brother said to him: "Tom, what's the idea of washing your hands so often?"

"Oh," said Tom, "I want to get strong."

"Well, what difference does that make?" asked his brother.

"Why," said Tom, "don't you know, it says in the Bible, 'He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger' (Job 17:9)? That's why I am washing them."

Of course his very wise brother had to explain to him that by "clean hands" the Bible meant "clean deeds and clean thoughts"; but little Tom had learned one good thing—that *cleanness and strength always go together.*

So never let cleanness go—either out of your life or out of your words. "Swear not at all," says Jesus.

One of the worst things about swearing, boys and girls, is that it "turns the air blue." How can that be, you say? Well, it makes an atmosphere, in which "anything" can be said; it encourages all kinds of bad thoughts and all kinds of bad talk. "Birds of a feather flock together."

Now, if you will remember that there is One, altogether holy and pure, Who hears every word you speak, you will never "swear," but will always keep your words, like your thoughts, sweet and clean.

The thought of Christ will make it easy for you to obey this further command of our great King.

7

FEAR NOT

(Luke 12:32.)

ARE you afraid? Well, not, perhaps, quite afraid—betwixt and between, shall we say? Just a teeny, weeny bit afraid! It is a very nasty feeling, isn't it? It is also rather dangerous. First, because it makes you "lose your head," and sometimes even control of your body. People have been known to stand still, and get run over by an approaching car or train, simply because they were rooted to the ground with fear.

There was a man once in a coal mine whose duty it was to feed the mine horses on Sunday. One Sunday, when he was down the mine a great cyclone burst over the district, making the heat so intense that both the man and the horses thought the mine was on fire. The man, mad with fear, rushed to the foot of the shaft and signalled for the cage to be lowered. Down it came, but when he tried to enter it, he couldn't move. He was paralyzed by fright. Up went the cage again, empty.

This was repeated several times before the man could break the spell of his fear. When at last he overcame it and rose to the top of the shaft, he learned, of course, that there was *nothing to be afraid of.*

That is so often the way, isn't it? "I have had many troubles," a wise man once said, "most of which never happened."

The second reason why "fear" is so dangerous is because it acts like a magnet, and helps to bring about the very thing that is dreaded. If you show fear in the presence of a bigger boy or girl than yourself, you tempt them to bully you. To make others afraid appeals very much to that "love of power" that is in us all. It tickles us. That is really what happens. Our vanity is tickled, and we want to use the power that makes others fear. Show yourself afraid of a boy, and he will probably run after you. Have you ever watched dogs fighting in the street? If you have, you will find that when one shows signs of fear, the other shows himself full of fight; but the moment courage returns to the one who started to run away, the other one turns tail in fear. It is rather funny to watch; but boys behave much in the same way.

Let a boy be afraid of a difficulty, of a lesson, or a scrape, and it will grow and grow, faster than Alice in Wonderland, till it becomes a mountain impossible to climb. Let him overcome his fear, and face the difficulty bravely, and it will grow smaller and smaller. It will run away from him, till it disappears entirely.

Now, of course, Jesus understood all this; that is why He says to you and me: "Fear not, little flock." He was thinking of sheep, evidently, and of how timid they are; yet even the mother

sheep will stand up bravely for her little lamb. There is nothing like *love* for giving folks courage, and if we truly love Jesus, we shall overcome every fear. "Perfect love," says St. John, "casteth out fear." So, if you love Jesus you will trust Him and obey His words, even when He says, "Be not anxious," "Let not your heart be troubled," "Fear not," "Be of good cheer."

If we love Him, we think so much of pleasing and helping Him that we forget ourselves; *and when we lose sight of ourselves we cease to be afraid.*

There was a little boy named Jimmie, who lived in a house in London, and when the enemy aeroplanes appeared over the city, during the war, he grew very frightened. The awful explosions at first terrified him. But Jimmie had a very wise mother. How wise mothers are, aren't they? She knew that Jimmie was very, very fond of his little baby brother, Basil, and so this wise mother said to Jimmie: "Little son, I want your help. I want you to watch beside Basil's little cot in case he wakes up, and if he should do so you must soothe him off to sleep again. Will you be my little sentinel?" "Yes, Mummie, I will—I'll keep Basil asleep." And so Jimmie took his place, as quiet as a mouse, beside the cot. Once baby stirred in his sleep, but Jimmie at once began to sing softly:

"Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so."

And somehow, the hymn helped both the baby and Jimmie. Presently father came home, and asked if everything were all right, and then he came upstairs very quietly, and Jimmie put his finger to his lips and said: "Hush, father! Baby is asleep; I'm keeping guard!" How proud he was, and so was father.

And Jimmie had quite forgotten his fear. "Perfect love casteth out fear." Is Jesus going to find a brave disciple in you?

One great reason for this command is that Jesus wants His boys and girls to grow up brave enough to carry out His will in the world. There is so much you cannot do until you are men and women; but while you are growing you can be practising "courage," and fighting "fear."

Remember that the great hero is not the person who does not know fear at all. There are very few people like that. But he is the one, who, though feeling fear, yet overcomes it and conquers himself. If you have proved a coward at any time, or in regard to any one thing, tackle the fear again. You may yet win victory.

And the thought of the love of Jesus will make you strong and unafraid. He says, "Fear not, little flock."

8

JUDGE NOT

(Matt. 7:1.)

WHY did our King issue this command? For two reasons, I think. He knew that only God really knows enough about any one to judge truly. The French have a proverb, which has a great deal of truth in it—"to know all is to forgive all." I wonder if that is why God is so forgiving? Certainly, we do not know all about each other.

The other reason was, I think, this—He knew that no boy or girl, no man or woman, likes to be unjustly treated. We all like "fair play," don't we? That is why we do not like the folk who are quick to "sit in judgment" on others. They are so often more quick than just. This was the trouble with the Pharisees. They were harshly critical of other people—regular fault-finders.

Well, now, if the great Spirit of Divine Love is in our hearts, we shall be ready and willing to think well of others. It is so easy to be mistaken when we think ill.

I remember reading once of some boys at boarding school, who thought Smith, one of the new boys, very much of a "mutt." He was always walking about the grounds with his nose in a book—"stuffing," as schoolboys call it.

He seemed to have no time for games, and certainly took no interest in the swimming. One day, when these boys were going along the river bank, they saw Smith just ahead of them.

"What a mutt he is!" said one.

"Stuffing again," said another.

"He deserves a good ducking," said a third.

"Let's push him in," said a fourth.

"I don't believe he can swim," said one of them.

"That won't matter; we'll soon drag him out," was the reply.

So they drew nearer and nearer to Smith, but just as they had nearly reached him he suddenly flung down his book and began running at top speed. As he ran, he was tearing off his coat: and soon they saw him plunge into the water, and strike out in splendid style. Then they saw, struggling in the water, a little child, who had fallen from the bank. Smith made a gallant rescue of the child, while the other boys stared, open-mouthed with astonishment, from the river bank. How utterly they had misjudged him! They found out afterwards that he was really a good all-round sport, but that he was working for a special scholarship which meant a lot to him and to his parents.

Be careful, boys and girls, not to *say* unkind things of people. If you really cannot say anything nice, say nothing.

Two boys, named Geoffrey and Lyle, were great chums. They attended a Sunday School

where each class had a secret password, and it was a point of honor to keep that word a strict secret. Unhappily the password of Geoffrey's class leaked out. It had been planned one evening in a barn on the hill. Just after the meeting Lyle saw his friend Geoffrey in close conversation with Tom Kinney, a member of another class. It was Tom Kinney who spread their password through all the school, and Lyle jumped to the idea that his chum Geoffrey had told him. Very hotly Lyle accused Geoffrey. He denied it. But Lyle said: "I saw you talking to him just after we'd decided; it must have been you, and I'll never speak to you again!"

Geoffrey turned away with a sad, white face. Unhappily, the other boys soon learned what Lyle thought, and they took it to their homes, and soon through all that little town the idea spread, that Geoffrey was a boy who couldn't be trusted.

Well, very soon, Tom Kinney heard what was being said, and then he explained that no one had told him. He had been passing the barn at the time, and had overheard the secret. Geoffrey had never said a word to him about it. Lyle was, of course, very sorry, and very pained that he had hurt his friend so. But—and here is the point—*everybody did not hear the explanation,* and it took Geoffrey a very long time, and cost him much pain and sacrifice, to overcome that idea which had got into people's minds, that he could not be trusted.

Do you remember Shakespeare's great words?

" Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

So let us " judge not," but rather think kindly and mercifully, of all whom we meet, looking for the best in them and not the worst.

9

THE GOLDEN RULE

(Luke 6:31.)

HOW do you like to be treated? Nicely, did you say? Kindly? Generously? Yes, I thought so. So do I. So does everybody. Then, of course, you are always nice and kind and generous to others? I wonder!

Now, the remembrance of that little but important fact—that others like what you like—is " the Golden Rule of Life," as Jesus taught it. This is how He put it: " Do to others as you would they should do to you." It is wonderful how much Jesus says about *doing*. Love for Him was never simply a nice *feeling*. It meant *doing* nice things. Especially it meant this

Golden Rule, this being fair to others, treating them as you would like to be treated yourself.

A great man, Tolstoy, once said: "Everybody is I." He meant that all other human beings have the same vivid sense of importance as you have. If that is so, and you want your "I" respected, it is plainly up to you to respect the "I" of everybody else.

"The world is a looking-glass
Wherein ourselves are shown."

One of the things I like about the Boy Scouts is that promise of theirs to do "one good turn" every day for somebody. Boys often need "good turns" done to themselves, and they get them, too. Let boys and girls really think of all the "good turns" done for them by other people, and they will never be slack, I think, about the Golden Rule.

Think of the "good turns" that God does for you. Why, every day He turns the world round! That's *some good turn,* isn't it? He turns the "seasons" round—spring, summer, autumn, winter. Where would you and I be without His "good turns"? "One good turn deserves another," we say. Don't you think we owe Him some? And when we ask Him how we shall pay them, He simply says: "Do to others as you would they should do to you." There is no one so unselfish as God.

Now, Scouts who know tell me that this doing

"good turns" takes a lot of thinking about. If you are not careful, you can be quite a nuisance to people, instead of the help you want to be; like the elephant who tried to help his friend the hen to hatch her eggs. He sat on them, and you can guess what happened! The hen wasn't at all pleased.

A Boy Scout was once taking a railway journey, and sitting opposite to him in the car were an old lady and a rough-looking boy. Between them was a bundle. Presently the train stopped at a station, and the boy jumped out.

The Scout spied the bundle on the seat, and thought: "Why, he's forgotten it! Here's a chance for my good turn." He picked up the bundle, and, calling to the boy, threw it out on the platform, just as the train started on its journey once more. And then, the old lady behind him said in her iciest tones: "How dare you! That's my bundle you've just thrown out of that window! Now what am I to do?" What, indeed? I expect the Scout proved equal to the situation, but it shows the truth of those words:

> *"Evil is wrought for want of thought,*
> *As well as want of heart."*

Put some hard thinking, boys and girls, into the Golden Rule, and so be really helpful to others. Try to stand in the shoes of others. Ask, "How should I like that if I were he?"

Jesus was always putting Himself in the place of others. You will remember His great saying: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

I remember once being very pleased with a young boy friend of mine. He used to go to a big, well-known school, and one day, he missed his French grammar. He found afterwards that another boy had stolen it. The theft was discovered, and the boy was punished, but not expelled. The other boys, however, began to make it unpleasant for this boy, who was really ashamed of what he had done. And my friend, a noble lad, had that power of mind which we call by the long word *imagination*. He could see how hard it was on this boy who had wronged him. He began to ask: "How should I like it if I had done wrong and felt very sorry, and yet found everybody 'rubbing it in'?" So he became this boy's chum and champion, and now both are doing splendidly. He played up to the Golden Rule, and I think Jesus must have been very pleased with him.

If you would find it easy to carry out the Golden Rule, think of the "good turn" that Jesus did for us all, by His life of hard toil and faithful service, and His holy death of love upon the cross. Can any boy, thinking of Him, help doing just all he can to win the world for Jesus? And the best way of doing it is to live out the Golden Rule.

10

TELL THE TRUTH

(John 14:6.)

THIS is another command of the King, although Jesus does not anywhere say so in just these words. He warns us in His teaching, however, about "the idle word," He shows His hatred of all lies, and of Himself He said, "I am the Truth" (John 14:6). Every boy or girl, therefore, who casts out "truth" from his or her mind and life and speech is casting out the Lord Jesus.

But why should Jesus want His disciples to be so careful about "truth"?

Can you tell the time? Well, it depends on the clock a little bit, doesn't it? If the clock is fifteen minutes slow, you may tell the time that the clock tells, but you won't get to school at the right hour.

What a nuisance and mischief a clock is that tells the *wrong* time! Sometimes very great trouble results. Important engagements are not kept, and often great loss occurs.

Every true man prides himself on punctuality. It is a way of telling the truth and keeping things true. It keeps me *in time* with God's universe. All God's things keep good time. Supposing the sun were a day late in rising in

the morning, or setting in the evening. Supposing spring came in autumn and summer in winter, and suppose that next year, ashamed of such unpunctuality, they tried to come at the right time, what a mess the world would be in. And human life always gets into a mess when people do not tell the truth.

Suppose that when you went for your next railroad journey the signals did not "tell the truth." Supposing one was down when it should have been up! Through would go your train, the engineer all unknowing, and then would come the smash and crash, and your life and the lives of others would be in peril! That is *always* the end of a lie, smash! and crash! He who runs his head against the truth runs his head against a stone wall! And think what a dreadful world it would be, if none of us could believe any one else's word! Very soon we should all be fighting, and be back at savagery once more.

Never be afraid to tell the truth.

I read not long ago of a brave little fellow whose mother was a widow. Dick was the only boy, and he wanted very much to earn some money to help his mother. Going to school one day he noticed in a store window, "Boy Wanted," and he made up his mind "to be the boy they wanted."

So after school he called at the store.

"What do you want, my boy?" asked the shopman.

"I want to come and work for you, sir," said Dick. "I'm the boy you want."

"Are you fond of work?" asked the man.

"No, sir," replied Dick.

"No?" cried the man—"do you suppose I want a lazy boy? I want a boy who loves work."

"But there isn't one," replied truthful Dick. "No boy *loves* work."

The man seemed taken aback by such frankness, and then, more interested in Dick than he had been, he asked, "Well, what do you love?"

"Games," replied Dick, "and candy, and my pals; but I love my mother most of all, and that's why I want to work for you."

And the merchant said to himself, "Well, this boy will always tell me the truth, at any rate, and if he loves his mother, I expect he will work well enough.

"All right," he said to Dick; "you are the boy I want."

And indeed Dick is the kind of boy we all want.

That is the point to bear in mind. Truth and safety go together. To trust in a lie is to trust in something that has no reality. It is like leaning *on something that is not there.* You cannot help but fall over.

Make no truce with lies. "Swat that lie" is a good motto. Go for the very first one the moment it shows its head. Keep to the truth, and you are bound to be safe; and the pain it

may sometimes cost is nothing compared to the mountainous burden into which a lie can grow.

Tell the truth, above all, to keep company with your King. He is the very Soul of Truth. "I am the Truth," He says. You will surely never part from Him!

11

WATCH

(Matt. 16:41.)

JESUS came once to three of His disciples, and warned them with this command: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

I think that Jesus was feeling, just then, the great power that sin had in the world. We know what terrible grief it brought to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. And so He issued this command to His disciples that they should keep a sharp lookout against sin. They were to be like soldiers on sentry duty, and to send their message to headquarters for help, should they need it.

And by this time, I am sure, you have found out that you need this command if you are to fulfil the others. Sin creeps upon us as stealthily as an Indian warrior upon his foe. Little by little, step by step, it comes.

A friend of mine in Madagascar once had a baby crocodile given her. Such a little thing it

was, and she kept it at the bottom of her garden on the bank of a river. Then, having to go away for a few months, she forgot all about it.

Presently news came, that the village was attacked by a terrible enemy, a large crocodile which had already done great damage. She found that it was her little friend, whom she had thought so harmless. She did not know that crocodiles grow very swiftly.

So do thoughts, boys and girls. Nothing is swifter than thought, and it grows very quickly, too. *Watch your thoughts!* That is where the trouble usually begins. It was because Jesus knew how silently and swiftly wrong thoughts and feelings can grow in the heart, that He said, "Watch." He was thinking of Judas; once he had been as good a disciple as any other. He was thinking of Peter, the proud boaster; soon he would fall because of his pride. He thought of the Jewish nation, with its mind full of wrong ideas, the cause of all its sin and trouble.

The word Jesus used for "repent" is a word meaning *change your mind,* alter your thoughts. If wrong thoughts come, get rid of them in the quickest and best way, by thinking the right ones at once.

Watch your lips! They are the main gateway by which your thoughts reach the world. Keep them clean. Keep them truthful.

Watch your deeds! Don't act always on the spur of the moment. "Look before you leap." "Think before you act." There are some boys

and girls who are just like pop-guns. They are so all-of-a-sudden. Often do they have cause to regret bitterly their hasty actions. Beware of temper or, rather, of losing it. "Temper" is quality, as in "the temper of a sword." Don't lose your "quality."

But there is a further meaning that I would like you to give to this word "Watch."

You know that Jesus wants His disciples to be on the lookout for opportunities of doing good, as well as for opportunities of avoiding evil. It is the purpose of the true soldier, to seize every opportunity of winning a victory for his king. Will you "watch" for such opportunities? Whenever others are in need, will you be *quick* to help? Often many people suffer needlessly because others who would help them are too careless to notice their need.

There was once a king, who believed that his subjects were becoming very selfish and careless of one another's needs. He thought, therefore, that he would test them. So in the dead of night, he caused a very big stone to be placed right in the middle of the main road of his capital town. The road was not very wide even when clear, and the great stone was in everybody's way.

There it stood for a whole week, and no one was thoughtful enough of others to remove it. One by one, as they came to it, they went to all kinds of trouble to get round it; but there it remained, a nuisance to all. Then at the end

of the week, the king issued a proclamation, saying that on a certain day he would come, and with his own hand remove the big stone. He forbade any one to touch it till then on the pain of death.

The citizens were filled with curiosity, especially at the idea of the king removing the stone himself. " How strong he must be! " they said.

The great day came, and all the city turned out to watch. The king dismounted from his carriage, went up to the huge stone, caught hold of it with one hand, and lifted it easily above his head! Then every one saw that the *stone was hollow;* a child almost could have moved it. How foolish and ashamed the people felt!

Then, presently, the king untied from the hollow of the stone a little bag and poured its contents—a glittering shower of jewels—out before the people. " These," he said, " might have been the rich reward of the citizen, watchful enough over the interests of all, to have removed this stone; but now these jewels are the king's again. O my people, cast out selfishness from your hearts, and by love serve one another! "

Shall you stand the King's test, do you think? Will you be watchful to do good as well as to avoid sin?

12

PRAY

(Matt. 16:41.)

WHEN Jesus said, "Watch!" He also said, "Pray!" because, I think, He knew how often we should need God's help. Do you pray? Really pray, I mean, not simply *say* your prayers? What do you *think* when you pray? A great poet says, "Words without thoughts never to Heaven go"; and Jesus warns us against "vain repetitions."

Do you *like* saying your prayers? Or do you just rattle them off anyhow, and jump into bed as quickly as possible? If you *thought* of what prayer really is, you would *like* praying. For when any one really and truly prays, then *God comes.* "Draw nigh unto me, and I will draw nigh unto you," He says. Will you *think* of that whenever you pray?

Miss Amy Le Feuvre, whose books you have read, I expect, tells a story of a little fellow who, because he liked saying his prayers, once saved the prayer-meeting of a church.

It all began with his dear old grandmother falling downstairs and breaking her leg. Mrs. Batty went to a church which neglected prayer so badly that only she and the minister, Mr. Alister, were usually present at the weekly meeting for prayer.

When the old lady found herself in bed with a broken leg on the day of the prayer-meeting, she was in great distress. Her little grandson, Robby, was having tea with her, and overheard her telling her neighbor about it.

"You see," said Mrs. Batty, "I'm Number Two. You know it says, 'Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst.' There's just me and the minister, and then the Almighty comes. And now there'll be no Number Two."

Robby crept out of the room, climbed up to the peg for his overcoat, and struggled into it, saying to himself: "The minister'll not be alone to-night. Robby'll go and say his prayers wiv him. And then God'll come, too."

Presently, having escaped from the house, he was marching bravely up the dark street. An old farmer, Peter Quirls, met him, and wanted to know what he was doing out so late.

"Granny's broke her leg," said Robby, "and I'm going to say my prayers wiv the minister. I'm Number Two, and if I go the Almighty'll come." And on he went.

The old farmer looked after him in amazement, and then followed him.

The minister was in his church, waiting for his people to come to prayer. Presently in came little Robby.

"What do you want, my little man?" asked Mr. Alister.

"Please, Granny's broke her leg and can't

come," was the reply. Then the little voice went on: "Please, is the Almighty here? I 'spect He'll come, now He sees me here."

The minister started.

"Granny says He promised, if there was two, to come, and I'se Number Two i'stead o' Granny."

"Have you come to pray with me, Robby?" asked the minister, laying his hand very tenderly on the flaxen, curly head.

Robbie nodded. "I can say my prayers, an' you can say yours, an' then the Almighty won't go away disappointed, 'cause nobody wanted to speak t' Him."

The minister knelt down and so did Robby, and so did old Peter Quirls, who had followed Robby, and was hiding at the end of the church. Such a wonderful prayer the minister prayed. It was as though he felt God was there, and Robby certainly did.

And then Robby prayed—his little prayers that he loved so much.

This was too much for Peter Quirls, who came stumbling awkwardly up the aisle and offered his prayer, in broken tones, with the others.

When they rose from their knees, he turned to the minister. "Ye'll never see me absent from the prayer-meeting again, parson!" he said huskily, and hurried away.

And so Robby saved the prayer-meeting, for Peter Quirls told everybody, and they all began to feel ashamed, and began to attend the meet-

ing. How pleased Robby's granny was, and how pleased God must have been!

There is such great need that God should come more and more into the lives of boys and girls and men and women, for God is Love and Peace and Joy. Will you make a gateway of your soul for Him? Will you pray to Him, both alone and with others?

One of the most beautiful things Tennyson ever wrote was this:

"Pray for my soul . . .
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Children, pray! It is the King's command.

II

PRAYERS OF THE KING

13

ARE YOU LISTENING-IN?

A HAPPY day and week to you all! And here's how to make sure of it—"Listen-in" to your Heavenly Father! You all know about listening-in now, don't you?

I heard not long ago of a lad who was travelling across the Atlantic in one of our big liners. He had been brought up in a Christian way in a very rich home, but had got amongst bad companions. Some of these were on board, and they led Harry this time into the bad practice of gambling. Gambling is wrong because it is the staking of money on a chance or hazard in the hope of taking the same amount of money from everybody else in the game, and so *getting a lot for nothing.* It is the height of selfishness and greed and the spoiling of sport, and those who do it become rapidly full of the ugly spirit of greed and also of laziness.

Harry lost his money; tried again and lost; and, under the teasing of his really unfriendly friends, ran into debt. He was faced with the difficulty of paying away more money than he had, and he felt terribly ashamed of his weakness. He spent a sleepless night wondering what to do. Suddenly he remembered that his father was following by another liner that had

already left port, and he remembered the wireless. He knew how it would grieve his father, who was a man of fine principle; but early next morning he obtained permission to send over the wireless this message: "Dear Father, I am in want of money, $50.00. My own fault, foolish and wrong. I am very sorry and will not do it again. Will you help me?"

The wireless operator flashed the message out across the ocean. It found the other ship and was delivered to the boy's father. A little while later back came the answer: "Since you see your fault I will do it. I authorize purser to pay you $50.00. Don't repeat the blunder. Remember you are my son." How grateful that lad felt to his father and to the wonderful power that could put them so quickly in touch with each other! You may be sure he kept his promise. He was cured of gambling forever and chose other friends.

You have heard of the famous Dr. Barnardo, who first set up homes in the big city of London, over in England, for its little waifs and strays. Those homes have now grown into great buildings and also into a little town of beautiful home-like cottages called Barkingside.

There is a fine story told about those cottage-homes. When Dr. Barnardo first had the idea people did not seem to like it—it was too new for many minds, and the good doctor was sadly discouraged. No money came in for his new scheme, and it seemed impossible. So upset

was he that he planned to go to Oxford, where some religious meetings were being held, that he might get cheered up again. On the journey he found that the only other person in the car with him was a dear old friend of his—a real saint of God. So he told him his trouble—how disappointed he was about the cottage-homes.

"But," said his friend, "if God's blessing is not upon this scheme, will you give it up?"

After some thought, Dr. Barnardo replied: "Yes—I only want it if it is really God's will!"

"Then let us kneel down here in the car and tell Him so," said the old man, "and we will ask Him to let you know His will while you are at Oxford."

So they knelt down and offered their prayer. Presently they reached Oxford, and went to their hotel. In the morning Dr. Barnardo was dressing when suddenly the door of his bedroom burst open and a tousled head was thrust round the corner of it.

"Are you Dr. Barnardo?" was the question hurled by the intruder.

"Why, yes," replied the doctor.

"Have you got any of those cottages yet you've been asking for?" was the next question.

"N—no," stammered the doctor in utter surprise.

"Well, put me down for the first one," and slamming the door, the man departed. Dr. Barnardo dropped his hair-brush, dashed through the door, and tore along the corridor

after his unknown benefactor. He caught him just as he reached his room.

"You must tell me your name!" cried the doctor.

"Oh, certainly, come in," said the man. Then they had a wonderful conversation. The unknown told Dr. Barnardo how he and his wife had planned to give one of these cottage-homes in memory of a dear little daughter who had gone to heaven, but somehow business being very heavy the man had kept putting the matter off.

But that morning he had said to the bell-boy who brought his shaving-water: "Anybody important in the hotel, boy?" And when the boy had said, "Yes, sir, Dr. Barnardo, sir," the man had leaped out of bed and, scarcely waiting to dress, had sped along to Dr. Barnardo's room to make sure of that cottage-home.

Then Dr. Barnardo told his story, and together they knelt down in that hotel room and thanked God for His quick answer about the cottages for orphan boys and girls.

Those homes stand at Barkingside to-day, bright and beautiful in the sunshine—a testimony to the God who answers Prayer.

You need help every day; help in trouble; help to overcome your own sins and mistakes; help to keep true and right. Will you try more than you have done, the wonderful wireless of God that is called Prayer? If Jesus found it helpful to pray often and sometimes long (He

sometimes "arose a great while before day" to pray) surely you and I cannot do without it. We know how generous God is. Let us remember we are His sons and daughters, and that He loves to hear us talk to Him just as our earthly mother and father love to hear us. One of our great poets, Tennyson, has said very beautifully:

"Speak to Him thou, for He hears
And spirit with Spirit can meet,
Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands or feet."

14

THE KING AT PRAYER

DO you ever find yourself wishing that you could go back to the time when Jesus lived on earth, and follow Him about like the disciples, and watch Him?

Well, we cannot do that, however much we desire to; but it is a good practice to jump upon that magic horse called Imagination, and travel back across the years, and try, in thought, to live with Jesus in those days.

There is one scene I want you to visit with me. It is a bright morning, very early, and the disciples have gathered at the foot of the hills that border the Lake of Galilee. If you take a map of the Holy Land in the time of our Saviour, you will find the spot marked Khan

Minyeh. It was, I think, upon this hillside that their Master was accustomed to spend the early hours of the morning in prayer, often rising a great while before day to keep His lonely but lovely tryst with His Heavenly Father. Jesus would often break into audible prayer when with His disciples, and it is in this way, most probably, that snatches of His prayers have found a place in the Gospels. But He seems to have loved to get right away, even from His chosen band, in the early morning for special speech with God. On this occasion, when we are with them, we see His tall figure striding firmly down the mountainside, full of high purpose and noble resolve. As He draws nearer we catch the light in His eyes, the unearthly joy of His countenance. His transfigured appearance tells us plainly of the high company He has been keeping. It is as though the very loveliness of God, the very beauty of Heaven is shining through Him, and we are not surprised when Peter, who is always spokesman, gives vent to the holy envy stirring in all our hearts, and says impulsively: "Lord, teach *us* how to *pray!*"

The light on the Saviour's face deepens more gloriously still at these words, for this is one of the happiest moments of His life. He feels that His disciples are getting really eager at last to share His great secret about God, and with great joy He fashions for them a *model prayer.* It is a prayer that He means them to keep beside them always as a kind of pattern for all their

A VILLAGE IN GALILEE

own praying, and as the beautiful words sink into our hearts we feel that at last we do know better how to pray.

To pray like Jesus! How wonderful that would be! To gain in our lives the beauty and strength that were in His, and which He always said came from His Father—who of us does not desire that? And, boys and girls, it is so important for us to be able to pray like Jesus that we are told again and again to pray "in His name." That means in His spirit, in His character. Now there is one thing above all else in the character of Jesus that we must make sure of in our praying, and He puts it into His model prayer for us. It is His unselfishness. How does the model prayer start? "Our Father!" How does it go on? "Give *us*!" "Forgive *us*!" "Deliver *us*!" The prayers of our King were never only for Himself, even when He was most alone, but always for others too. There is no other way of approaching a God like the Father of Jesus—a God who is *Love*. Did you ever hear the story of the best prayer?

There was once, so a certain beautiful song says, an angel sent by God from Heaven to search for the purest prayer. In his quest he went first of all to the house of the wise man. But he found him praying: "I thank Thee, O Lord, for my wisdom. Let knowledge grow from more to more, especially my knowledge."

The angel thought it a very good prayer, but not the best or the wisest. So he passed on to

the house of the rich man. There he found the man praying too, but he was thanking God for his riches, and asking still to be blessed and kept from poverty.

From that home he turned rather impatiently, and sought out the poor man's cottage. Here he heard a prayer that was both very much like and very much unlike the others. The poor man was complaining bitterly of his poverty, and praying for some of the rich man's money.

"Ah," thought the angel, "men's prayers are all alike—they all begin and end with self."

Sadly he turned away, despairing of finding the best prayer on earth, when suddenly there came to his ears from another poor home, a child's voice. He listened carefully, and these were the words he heard:

"Please God, make dear daddy well, for mother's sake. Amen."

"Ah," cried the angel, "here it is! The purest prayer has been found." And he took it straight to God, Who answered "Yes" immediately, He was so pleased with it.

Why, I wonder, did the angel consider this the best prayer of all? Can you say? You will be able to answer that question readily if you remember that in the model prayer Jesus gave for His disciples to use He never once uses the first personal pronoun singular. God likes us, when we approach Him in prayer, always to have others besides ourselves in mind.

Read Christ's great prayer in John 17, and

see how little He asks for Himself and how much for others. If Jesus is your King and prays, you, too, must pray and pray like Him.

15

THE FIRST THING IN PRAYER

LET us now begin to look carefully at this great treasure Jesus has given us—a model prayer. We have made this prayer one for public worship, and Sunday after Sunday we say it or sing it all together in church. That is a very good thing to do, but it is well to remember that Jesus gave it to His little band of disciples as a pattern for their own praying, one by one. We can be quite sure that the order in which He puts things in this model prayer is of great importance.

What, then, is the first thing? I heard a boy say, not long ago: "Give me the jam!" But he didn't get the jam until he improved upon his request and said: "Mother, dear, give me the jam, please!" And Jesus reminds us that the first thing in prayer is, not what we are going to get, or what we *want;* but, instead, it is the One to Whom we are speaking. *God Himself* must be our first thought. "Thou art more than all Thy gifts"; so a great man said once about God; and that is true, is it not? You would not think much of a friend who came to

you only for what he could get, who liked you for candy, or ice-cream, or for the use of your tennis racket, but cared little or nothing for you yourself. It is equally unfair and unkind, as it is irreverent, to think of God chiefly as One Who will do what we want done, and give to us what we need, and to forget how much more wonderful He must be than all His gifts.

I heard, not long ago, of an English missionary whose children were all born in China, and so had never seen England. The time of their father's furlough, or holiday, came round, and he began to tell them of the wonderful things they would see in this country. "Shall we see the King?" cried the children with excitement. "Yes," said their father, "you shall see the King." After they had been in England some months they began to ask: "When shall we see the King, daddy?" Now, poor father had expected that there would be things going on in London to which the King would drive through the streets, and that he would be able to gather his little family on the pavement and so show them His Majesty the King. But, to his dismay, nothing seemed to happen to bring this about. "You promised, father; you know you did," said the children sternly.

So at last father wrote the nicest letter he could to Buckingham Palace, asking when the King was likely to be driving in or out of the palace, so that he and his children might look at him. He explained all about their being born in

China, and never having seen their monarch. In reply he received a short note from the chamberlain, telling him to be outside the palace gates at a certain hour on a certain day. You may be sure they were all there—mother, father, and the boys and girls—all dressed up in their Sunday best. But no carriage or King appeared. Presently a gentleman came out of the palace and asked the missionary if he was the one who had written the letter. When he said "Yes," the gentleman replied, "Will you please come inside?" They were shown into a room, and waited there a few minutes, and then in walked King George. I wonder how those children felt then! The King stayed and chatted with them for quite a while, asking kind questions about the missionary's work and about his boys and girls. Wasn't that a kingly thing to do?

Now, do you suppose those English children cared one straw about the possible gems or money the King might give them, or the knighthood he might have bestowed upon their father? Not a bit of it. It was all swallowed up in the wonder and the joy of being face to face with their King. That was the best thing of all.

So it is in prayer, boys and girls, only much more so. How wonderful that God should listen for your voice amid all the voices of His many worlds! How wonderful that He has time for you and me! Let it never be said that we have no time for Him. He comes first. To spend some time in His company—that is the supreme

thing. "Our Father, which art in Heaven." Say His beautiful name at the beginning of your prayer, and then *wait a little while till you feel His Presence.* Let Him be more to you than His gifts or your wants; and prayer will become a great joy to you, as it was to Jesus.

16

THE SECOND THING IN PRAYER

HOW does this prayer, which Jesus gave to us for a pattern of our own praying, go on? "Our Father"—that is the first thing—*God Himself!* Here is the second—"Hallowed be Thy Name." We know by this time that "name" stands for character. In olden times names had more real meaning than they have to-day. You may remember the many cases in Scripture in which names are given for their meaning, and because they stand for the nature or the work of the person concerned. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus—for he shall save his people from their sins." "Jesus," like "Joshua," means "A Saviour." So to hallow the Name of God is to hold sacred His character, to worship His nature, to remember in our praying *what that One is like* to Whom we come.

Jesus warns us, in His teaching, more than once that we only waste our time and breath when we try to draw near to God with the wrong

spirit in our hearts or with deliberate sin in our life. You will remember His story of the two men who came up to the temple to pray. One of them, the Pharisee, forgot that God is unselfish and thinks of others rather than Himself. He did not "hallow" the Name of God, but instead he was full of pride and contempt for others. Read the story again for yourself (Luke 18) and note specially the phrase "*the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself*"! Do you see? He prayed with himself. He did not get through to God because his spirit was wrong. He remained by himself alone. How sad to adopt the attitude of prayer, to go into the church for worship, and yet be shut out from God's presence because one's heart is not right!

How different it was with the other man! Although he was a publican—that is, a tax-gatherer, and they were mostly very cruel in those days—he knew his fault, and came to God humbly, seeking to be put right. "God be merciful to me, a sinner," was his prayer. Jesus teaches us the same great lesson, boys and girls, immediately after He gives us the model prayer. He says, "If ye forgive not . . . neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." So you see everything depends upon our approaching God in the right spirit. He wants us to be in earnest, and any one who seeks His aid must show a true respect for His holy character and will.

Let me tell you a story of something that hap-

pened during the Great War, that will help you to remember to be on your guard about this very important matter.

Some little Belgian children were playing outside a village that had been ruined by the enemy's artillery one evening. Presently the Angelus—the call to evening prayer—began to ring out from the little church bell. They drew near to a wayside shrine, and underneath its large cross they stood with bowed heads and began to recite the Lord's Prayer. The eldest child—a girl—led the others on through the beautiful prayer until they reached "Forgive us our trespasses"; then she stopped, and so did the others. It was not long since the cruel enemy had ruined their village and injured their homes. How could they go on to say "as we forgive those who . . ." For several moments there was silence. Then they heard a man's voice behind them. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation." Steadily the strong clear voice led the children through the prayer to the solemn Amen. When the astonished children turned round, there was a tall spectacled man in uniform, surrounded by a group of officers. He was their King—Albert the Good, as he is called. He had proved himself their king indeed by leading them in the bravest and greatest prayer—the prayer that is likest God—the prayer of forgiveness.

We can say the same of King Jesus, boys and

girls. He is our Leader in hallowing the name of God, in honoring God's character by the most perfect imitation of it. Jesus never prayed a prayer of which He could feel ashamed, and He so adored the Heavenly Father that God's beautiful character lived and shone perfectly in Him. Let us say it again softly to God: "Hallowed be Thy Name." That is another way of saying "O God, I do really love Thee—Thou art so beautiful." Say that and mean it, and then wait until you feel God's joy coming back from Him upon your soul.

17

THE THIRD THING IN PRAYER

IF God Himself comes first, and His beautiful character second, what is it comes next? His purpose! "Thy Kingdom come—Thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." That is God's wonderful, splendid purpose for this world, boys and girls! Jesus teaches us here quite plainly that somewhere in God's creation there is a place or an order of society in which every one does perfectly the Will of God. We might call it the Capital City of God's Kingdom. But God desires His Will to be perfectly done in earth, which we may regard as one of His distant colonies. It is, I fear, a very rebellious colony, where many of God's children forget what their Heavenly Father is like, and permit themselves

to desire and to do evil. The beautiful life of Heaven, however, is always invading the life of earth, and striving to stamp upon it its own pure character, and one of its means of invasion and victory is to inspire in others of God's children this lovely prayer. Because if we pray this prayer earnestly we cannot but yield up our own hearts and lives more perfectly to God's Holy Will.

Now, honestly, boys and girls, is this your first great request in praying? Notice that up to now it has been all adoration in our act of prayer. Now for the first time we ask for something. And it is not to be what *we* want, but what *God* wants. His Will, not our own, must be our chief concern. God has no more use than we have for folk who are only His friends for what they can get.

Yet really, boys and girls, in the answer to this prayer, in the actual coming of God's Kingdom, lies every true happiness that the human heart can desire. We must not think of God's Kingdom or His Will as something that thwarts or delays our happiness, but rather as the only thing that can ever make our happiness lasting and certain. No wonder Jesus was so fond of this phrase: "The Kingdom of God." It occurs one hundred and twelve times in the Gospel story, and as Jesus describes it, it is always a very happy kingdom.

Will you, then, put God's Will first? It is that which brings the kingdom. We know that

King George is the king of England; now, King George's kingdom is not made up of so many square miles of territory—that is the very least part of his kingdom. It is made up of loyal hearts that stand true to the spirit of England, and are glad to hail him king. And the king's wish is law to his faithful subject—unless it is ever contrary to the Will of God. In the same way the Kingdom of God comes wherever a life is devoted loyally to God's Will.

What are you prepared to do, boys and girls, to help forward the Kingdom of God and to further God's Will? You pledge yourself to that every time you use this prayer.

In the old cathedral at Lichfield, in England, there is an old book—a hand-written copy of the Gospels. Written on the back cover is the story of how the book came to the cathedral.

It tells of two Welsh knights—named Geldi and Cingal. They were great friends, and fought in many different battles together, but they were very different in nature. Geldi was open and generous, Cingal was close and cunning and greedy. Geldi loved the Church of God. Cingal did not care. One day, when visiting Cingal's castle, Geldi discovered a beautiful hand-written copy of the story of Jesus, as told by the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The moment he saw it he longed to possess it, not for himself, but to give it to the little church he attended and loved so well—the church in the valley, at the head of which his

own castle stood. Knowing that his friend Cingal was wealthy, Geldi thought it quite enough to explain to him how worn and shabby was the Gospel-book in his own dear church. "Will you give me this one for the sake of God's Church?" asked Geldi. "Indeed," replied Cingal, "I'll do no such thing! If you care to *buy* it, however, you may do so." "What shall I give you?" asked Geldi at once. Then Cingal indulged a long-cherished and crafty purpose. He said: "There is but one price that I will take, and that is your favorite charger." Geldi's heart sank, for he loved his horse better than anything else he possessed. But quickly he set aside his own feelings. God's Church must not suffer by his selfishness. "Very well," he replied; and soon he said farewell to his beloved steed, and took the cherished book which told the greatest story on earth. Great was the joy of all the people when the new and beautiful Gospel-book was placed in the little church.

What can you give up for the sake of God's Kingdom?

18

THE PRAYER FOR THE BODY

WE come now, in the model prayer, to three petitions which have to do with our human need. The first great request, as we have seen, is that God's Will may be achieved. The

next requests are for human blessing; and they are bread for the body, and forgiveness and deliverance from evil for the soul.

It is important for us to notice that Jesus gives a real place to our physical need in prayer. He knows quite well that we must have food and health for the body if the soul is to flourish here as it should. Jesus did not teach that a hungry or sick condition of the body was holier than a healthy condition. Nor must we ever call such conditions the Will of God. If men hunger it is the fault of men—God in Nature provides enough for everybody. Sometimes it is the fault of those who suffer; sometimes it is the fault of imperfect methods, which make it difficult to give to every man his share of Nature's bounty; sometimes it is the fault of selfish men, who are unwilling to share with others. During the recent famine in Central Europe the warehouses and ports of other parts of the world were quite bursting with grain. Is this why Jesus teaches us to pray for "*our* daily bread," and not for "*my* daily bread"?

Is this why He makes "our daily bread" the *only* request for physical good? Does He want us to be as unselfish and as modest as possible in what we *take* from the common store, or in what we *keep* of the good things that come our way?

This is, I think, one of the reasons. Jesus wants His subjects to deal unselfishly with each other, and so He teaches them to pray only for "*our bread*"—just enough to keep one in

healthy life. I don't think He meant merely bread, but just the plain necessities of healthy life—as we sometimes say, "I must earn my *bread and butter.*"

There is another reason, I think, why Jesus makes the request for bodily need so small and simple. *Because God helps those who help themselves.* God does not aim to do for us what we can well do for ourselves. This is often the meaning of His "No," in answer to our requests. It means that He wants us to look round and see what we can do. Did you ever hear of the little girl who startled her mother one evening by praying, "Please God, make Rome the capital of Turkey"? Later on mother found that the girl had made a mistake in her geography examination paper. She had put down Rome as the capital of Turkey, and wanted God to change the cities overnight, so that her error might become right! We know quite well that if God were to cover our ignorance like that we should never learn at all. Yet it is just as foolish for us to imagine that God will permit us to cover our laziness with prayer. No boy or girl who prays for daily bread should fail in *industry,* without which grain would never be sown, or reaped, or packed, or ground, or sold in the store. Such industry is in itself a form of prayer, and a form that God quickly answers.

Some years ago the farmers of Canada were greatly troubled because frost used to come often very early in the season and kill their grain.

This made wheat-growing a risky and uncertain business. Doubtless many good Christian farmers prayed about the matter, and asked God to put it right. Well, He did, but not in the way they asked. His Spirit found a man who felt it his duty to pray in another way. This farmer diligently studied the different kinds of wheat, and blended them, and kept on experimenting through year after year. He did this at great sacrifice to himself, but at last he produced a wheat *strong enough to live through the frost,* and ever since then wheat-growing in Canada has been a safe and sound enterprise, and much grain has been saved to the world at large.

Yet God does send actual bread often where there is bitter need. Here is a true story of what happened to a friend of mine. He was riding his bicycle along a country road, when he saw lying in the middle of the road a loaf of bread. "It has dropped from a baker's cart, I expect," he said to himself. He rode hard, but nowhere did he meet or see a baker's man. Then he made a curious resolve. He said: "I will leave this bread at the first cottage where the blinds are down. In such a house there may be need of it." He had not gone far before he found a cottage with the curtains closely drawn across the windows. He knocked at the door, and a woman with a tear-stained face opened it. "I thought," he said, "you might be glad of this loaf of bread." "Indeed, I am," replied the woman. "My husband died last night. He

has been ill so long, and all our money is gone. I was just on my knees with my children, praying God to send us some food. God sent you here, I am sure."

So do not fail to pray, boys and girls, for "*our* daily bread."

19

PRAYER FOR THE SOUL—FORGIVENESS

WE now come, in this wonderful model prayer that Jesus gave us for our use, to two petitions on behalf of our Real Selves. A certain great man once said, "I never teach my child that he has a soul." And the saying rather shocked the people whom he told until he explained. "No," he said, "I never teach him that. I always teach him that he is a soul." That is a very important difference. Your soul is what you really are. You have a body, you are a soul. It is not surprising therefore that in His model prayer, Jesus treats the soul as being twice as important as the body. He gives to it two petitions, and only one for the body. But why does Jesus take forgiveness as the first great need of the soul? Because it is simply another way of saying that the first great need of the soul is God. Forgiveness stands for the restoration of right relationship between the soul and God. To the mind of Jesus forgiveness was a very big word. It contained the idea of "making it up."

You know what sometimes happens at school. Two boys who have quarrelled decide to make it up. Sometimes they just simply start afresh, and go on as they did before they quarrelled, but that means that each *gives himself* to the other in new friendship. But sometimes Jack rummages in his pocket and pulls out a penknife, and Tom feels in his and pulls out a top. Jack says, "Look here, you take my knife." Tom says, "You take my top," and the quarrel is made up by sacrifice on the part of each. It is that beautiful idea that is in this word forgiveness. When boys and girls do wrong they hurt not only others, but themselves. He that sinneth wrongeth his own soul. Really to forgive, therefore, God Himself must come more fully into the heart of His child, to make up for the loss that sin has caused. And the one who has done wrong must in turn give himself to God more earnestly to try to make up for his wrongdoing. This is true repentance, the desire to "make up."

There is therefore, in the word "Forgiveness" a great and beautiful idea of atonement, of which you will learn more when you are older. Whilst we must all try to make up for the wrong we do we can never quite succeed. There is something that only God is big enough and good enough to do, and this He has done in Jesus.

"There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin."

Some one has said that forgiveness therefore means forth-give-ness. When God forgives us He gives Himself forth to us. That is a beautiful thought, and of course if we want God to treat us like that it is only fair and right that we should be ready to treat others in the same way. Jesus tells us that God measures His forgiveness to us by our forgiveness to others. That is only another way of telling us that we can only receive God, as we ourselves give forth His spirit in dealing with others. Just as the pool which does not give forth its water grows stagnant and foul, and can no longer receive the stream that flows from the hills, so our hearts cannot receive God unless they are willing to give Him forth again. God wants to make a channel of every heart whereby He can flow through into the world. So as we forgive we are forgiven. We possess the God who is love by ourselves loving.

Some day I hope you will read Olive Schreiner's book, *Dreams*. In that book she tells us of a man who could not forgive another. This other had treated him very cruelly and very wickedly, and yet it was a great burden to the man's heart that he could not forgive, and he prayed to God about it, and this is what happened. God took him to a place where he could see this man who had wronged him, and then from the man who had done wrong God first of all stripped all those points of difference that made him unlike other men, and to the watcher

God said, "Whom do you see?" "Lord," he said, in wonder, "it is I, myself." And then God still further took from the man all those points of difference that distinguished the separate soul from God, and again God said to the watcher, "Whom do you see?" And in a whisper of trembling awe, he said, "It is God." And then God reclothed the man who had done wrong with all those points of difference till he became himself again. "Whom do you see?" asked God once more, and the man who could not forgive replied, "How beautiful my brother is!"

This is one of the stories that I always like to give to boys and girls because they are stories that grow up. Keep the story with you, fix it in your mind, and as you grow it will grow too, and become bigger and bigger as life proceeds. Perhaps it will help you to remember this great prayer for your soul's need and to really mean it as you pray.

20

PRAYER FOR THE SOUL'S NEED—THE COURAGE OF THE CROSS

WE come now on our journey through the model prayer to a part of it which has often puzzled people. This phrase, "Lead us not into temptation," has seemed to suggest to

some that God tempts His children to evil, and we are told very distinctly in St. James's Epistle that He never does any such thing. The word "temptation" is used in our day in almost entirely a bad sense, but in bygone days when our New Testament was translated, it was used in a good sense, merely the sense of trial or examination. I once read of a man who was standing in the Mint watching gold coins being tested, and an official asked him, "Why do you think we test them?" "To see if they are bad," was the prompt reply. "You are wrong," said the official. "We test them to see if they are *good*."

All things must be tested if they are to be worthy of trust. In fact they are tested every time they are trusted. But just as you do not sit on a chair hoping that it may let you down, so God never tests or tries His children hoping that they may fall. His tests are always full of the hope, the longing, the yearning, that His children may be proved worthy. Why then should we be taught to pray, "Lead us not into this testing"? Well, first of all, because Jesus wants us to be humble-minded, especially as to our character. As St. Paul put it once, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and as the Old Testament warns us, "Pride goeth before a fall." Jesus does not want us to fall. He wants us therefore to avoid the boastful spirit, and every true-hearted person feels the wisdom of thinking less rather than more of oneself. So Jesus would not have us hurry into the tests of

life, and every evil temptation is a test, though every test is not an evil temptation. Neither, however, would He have us too fearful, and so we notice in the second place, that the prayer does not stop at the word temptation. The magic word "but" follows it, and in that little word Jesus has taken back all of craven fear that might creep into such a prayer. When Jesus goes on, "But deliver us from evil," He means, of course, "deliver us at any cost," at the cost of any test or any trial. Nor is it only "deliver me from evil," but "deliver *us.*" You may yourself be free from evil, but if your brothers and sisters in the world are oppressed by evil, this prayer on your lips means that you are prepared to make any sacrifice and bear any trial if they may be delivered. Jesus is here teaching us to make the choice of the Cross as He made it. On another occasion you will remember He said to His disciples, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The followers of the Crucified must not shrink from suffering for the triumph of His cause.

The second great need of the soul, then, is for *the courage that can face the cross,* that can be even glad to suffer to deliver mankind from evil. Are you prepared to suffer to rid your own life of its faults? I fear sometimes there are boys and girls who pray to God to make them good, who are not prepared for any pain or hardship or self-denial in the process. Such

praying is idle. There are other boys and girls who think they are already good enough, and who run foolishly into temptation. They would do well to learn to pray the first part of this prayer as well as the second. Think what magnificent courage the praying of this prayer should build up in the soul. It should give to you courage like that of Dr. Theodore Pennell, whose life story you may one day read. He lived amongst the wild tribesmen of the frontier of Northwest India, for twenty years serving them, loving them, gradually winning them. So great was his courage that he never carried a weapon though in repeated peril of his life. He was always surprising them with kind deeds and amazing sacrifices. One day he was told that a jealous mullah was stirring up the people to kill him. He at once set out for the mullah's house, and entering it said, " I hear you are preaching that it would be a holy thing to murder me. I have come to ask you why you think so." The mullah was so astounded at such courage that he became Dr. Pennell's good friend and protector.

Another time a wild bandit named Chikki held the countryside in terror. Pennell, unarmed and alone, paid him a visit, and asked him to abandon his evil life. Chikki was won by the fearlessness of his visitor, and changed his way of life. Once when wild raiders were on the war-path seeking to kill everybody in their way, and with special instructions to kill Pennell, they

came upon him sleeping quite peacefully by the roadside, with only his turban for a pillow. There he lay, helpless and asleep, without thought of self-defense, without a scrap of precaution or fear, and though these men had been taught that it was a holy thing to kill him they could neither kill nor rob him. When at last, worn out by his labors to deliver his human brothers and sisters from evil, he lay dying in the Mission house, crowds of these wild mountaineers waited about the door for news of him, their hearts breaking with love for the fearless doctor who had not only known God's deliverance from evil himself but had caused so many others to know it too. Let that story make you braver with yourself, brave enough to be humble, brave enough to fight evil in your own life, brave enough to fight it in the life of all mankind as a follower of Him Who bore the Cross, brave enough to pray this prayer and to mean it.

21

THE PRAYER OF PRAISE

THE last sentence in the Lord's Prayer was not given by Jesus. It is the enthusiastic utterance of some one carried away by the beauty of this model prayer and the thoughts it roused within him. The first Christians thought the exclamation was so apt and beautiful that

they kept it as a fitting close to their public use of the Great Prayer. Thus the prayer is made to end on a note very dear to the heart of Jesus, and in this way it teaches us how best to praise God.

We feel at once, do we not, that prayer is not perfect without praise? We all like to be appreciated, don't we? You know how it warms your heart and acts like a tonic on your spirit to receive a really sincere word of praise, especially from some one you love and want to serve. Well, but if this is true of you and me, it is also true of our Heavenly Father, in Whose image we are made.

And how should One so wonderful as God our Father be praised? Should we do it carelessly and in a way that gives us as little trouble as possible? Or is it surprising that for the praise of God men have raised special and beautiful temples, cathedrals, and churches, and use every art of beautiful sound and noble words to utter man's appreciation of God? Will you think of this the next time you are tempted to stay away from church? Don't you think God may miss your tribute?

One of the greatest English-speaking poets, Robert Browning, tells in one of his poems a very beautiful Italian story. Long ago there lived in one of Italy's sunny towns a little boy with the splendid name Theocrite, which means "chosen of God." Like all poor boys in those days, he had to work very hard. The room in

which he worked was hardly bigger than a cell, yet cheerfully he plodded away at his tasks.

" But ever at each period
He stopped and sang ' Praise God! '
Then back again his curls he threw
And cheerfully turned to work anew."

And then one day a monk who heard him sing at his work said: " Why, little Theocrite, the Pope himself, this Easter Day in Peter's Church at Rome, could not praise God in better way." Now, the boy thought foolishly upon these words, and began to wish to praise God as Pope of Rome instead of as Theocrite, the little humble toiler. Thus he grew discontented. Then one day an angel came and carried him away to Rome. Then in Theocrite's little cell there was only silence, and praise was heard from it no more. *And God missed it.* Stooping from Heaven, God said—

" Nor day, nor night,
Now brings the voice of My delight."

So to put it right the angel came back dressed and disguised like Theocrite. Every one thought it was the boy himself, so well did the angel take his place. And he sang continual praise to God. But God was not deceived—

" I miss My little human praise,"

He said.

Meanwhile, in Rome, Theocrite became a student, then priest, then bishop, then cardinal, and at last Pope. But Theocrite was not what once he was—the simple-hearted, sunlit-natured boy. He was proud and ambitious. So though he still sang "praises," God, listening from Heaven, was still disappointed, and again God said:

"I miss My little human praise."

Somehow Theocrite thought there was something missing, too. Thoughts of his boyhood came back to him, and he longed for the old innocence and light-heartedness and content and joy.

So the angel took up the part of Pope, whilst Theocrite returned to his old humble work, and above the voices of all creation God, when He listened, heard *once more* "His little human praise."

Is not that a beautiful thought, boys and girls, that God is listening for "His little human praise" from every child of His, from the humblest?

How is "praise" sung in your class, in your home, in your school? With all the *heart* as well as all the *lungs?* Is it sung with real *love* and *thanks* to God in it *all?* Remember, God listens! May He find joy in your song as in little Theocrite's!

Plan your lives, boys and girls, for the praise of God.

It is the dearest desire of His heart that His Kingdom—so powerful and glorious—should fill the earth. There is no praise, therefore, so sweet in His ears as the song of a consecrated life given to the great crusade of the Kingdom.

22

THE KING'S OWN PRAYER

JESUS had a great love for times of prayer, and took care that His busy life did not crowd them out. We are told that *He arose a great while before day,* in order to make sure of time with God alone. Just before His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane He was pouring out His soul before the Father, and "the beloved disciple" must have overheard His words. For in the 17th chapter of the Gospel of St. John there is recorded a further great and beautiful prayer offered by our King. Open your Bible sometime at this chapter, and notice one thing especially, the way in which the prayer widens out over three increasing circles of interest.

There in the centre is Jesus in communion with the Father, and first of all He prays only for His disciples. *I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me* (v. 9). There is the first circle—the band of His first followers. Then later on He prays for the Church that would soon gather about the dis-

ciples—the Church-to-be, *for them also that believe on me through their word* (v. 20). There is the second circle. And for the Church-to-be He prays a very special prayer: *That they may be one . . . made perfect in one* (vv. 22 and 23). Why? Now comes the third circle—the full rich sweep of the great prayer—*that* THE WORLD *may believe; that* THE WORLD *may know* (vv. 21 and 23). Like a pebble falling into a pond and sending out ripples that widen and widen till they touch the shore, so the love of Jesus pours itself forth in this prayer in ever-widening circles till every one is included.

What must it have been like to overhear Jesus at prayer? How the purity and passion of His great love must have thrilled John and his friends! I remember hearing a great preacher, the son of a minister, say that the greatest influence in his life was not his father's sermons, but his father's prayers. He used to listen trembling and astonished outside the door of his father's study whilst his father spoke aloud to God of all the hopes and holy desires of his heart. And sometimes that father spoke to God about his boy. If you could overhear your mother or father praying for you, would it not put their hopes for you in a very sacred light? How impossible it would be for you to think cheaply of those pure and fervent wishes for your good! Similarly this great prayer of our King that we are permitted, as it were, to overhear, is " up " to you and me.

A young man who had permitted himself to get very wild and wicked in his way of life was once going upstairs to bed very late at night, when he passed his widowed mother's room. The light was still burning, and through the door came the low murmuring of her voice. The youth could not but hear. And this is what he heard. His mother was actually *asking God what was wrong with her—what blunders she had made—that her boy should be so unworthy!* Never till that moment had he realized the wonderful depth of his mother's love for himself, and he grew terribly ashamed as he heard this innocent one taking the blame of his folly upon herself before God. Will you read this prayer of the King's through carefully until the great love that is in every word of it sinks deep into your heart? Here we see the love of Jesus in the pure white light that streams from the throne of His Father in Heaven.

The main burden of this prayer we will look at presently, but there is one other lovely gem of thought we must not miss. It contains one sentence at least that is worth its weight in gold to every Christian soul, because it is the only reference Jesus makes *in prayer* to the future of His disciples beyond death. Here it is in v. 24. *Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that where I am, they also may be with me that they may behold my glory.* Is not that beautiful? It shows us the great King longing for the presence and the friendship of His dis-

ciples in that Wonder-Land which lies beyond the experience we call death. This was greatly in His mind towards the end, as His other beautiful words of promise show. *I go to prepare a place for you—that where I am ye may be also.* It is not wonderful that I should want to be with Jesus, and enjoy the glory of His friendship, but it is wonderful indeed that *He should want me* to be with Him, and should set any value on my friendship. What do you think about it? And if Jesus feels like that towards those who already are His disciples, I wonder if He feels the same towards those who have not yet made up their minds, or who are forgetting Him. Does He want to gather everybody into one glorious Fellowship of Eternal Happiness? If so, what difference should this make in our view of other people? Think over these questions before you read what follows.

23

THE KING'S SPECIAL DESIRE

IN this second Lord's Prayer there is one main petition which every Christian soul cannot but specially heed. It is that repeated cry uttered by Jesus concerning His disciples, "that they may be one"; "that they may be made perfect in one." We noticed something similar in the first Lord's Prayer, didn't we? The first

person singular is singularly absent from that prayer. It is "Our Father," "give us our daily bread," "forgive us," "deliver us." And here in this prayer is the same passion for the good fellowship, the unity or oneness of His people. Why was Jesus so earnest about this? Here are several reasons:

1. *Because Unity is Strength.* He knew that the world which crucified Him would try to break up His band of followers, and He wanted them to strengthen one another. If you pick up a stick it is a fairly easy thing to break it in your hands, but you pick up a bundle of sticks and try it—what a difference! And how splendidly loyal those first Christians were to one another, how bravely they shared their food and money and homes with one another whenever there was need.

2. *Because Love was to be their witness.* They were to show to the world the Spirit of their King, and He is the King of Love. "By this," He said, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples because ye love one another." And Jesus believed that the world would listen to such a testimony.

This oneness of love became such a great wonder in that ancient world at last that men looked at one another with astonishment and cried, "Behold how these Christians love one another." Once when plague broke out in the great city of Alexandria, things became so dreadful that victims of the plague were left alone in the street

or in their homes to die, all healthy people fleeing from them. You can imagine their awful wretched plight, forsaken even by their kith and kin. Then it was that the Christians of that city showed the power of Divine Love dwelling in their hearts. Fearless of the plague, they nursed their forsaken pagan brothers and sisters, ministered to their wants, saved many of them from death, soothed the dying moments of those they could not save, till the wonder of Christian love was told far and wide in the land. That power of loving even the unlovely these Christians learned through simply obeying the will of their Lord.

3. *Because Fellowship is the way to Perfection.* There is a perfection that none of us can know till we find our true place in relation to others. You have often played with picture-blocks and jig-saw puzzles, I know, and you have found the horse's head on one side of a block quite fine to look at by itself, but how much finer it looks dropped into its proper place in the picture! You have looked at the bit of jig-saw and it seemed quite neat and interesting, but it also had about it an air of being very unfinished. Then you found its right place in the puzzle, and at once its true beauty was found. So it is with every soul and every life, boys and girls. God has a place for you, a task for you, something for you to be, and in Jesus He calls you to fall into line with all others who are seeking to obey Him, that He may make you, with them, " per-

fect in one." You remember the jolly reunion you have at home every holiday—you had one last Christmas. Jack was home from school, Betty was back from college, father and mother and the baby were there, but Tom had been in hospital and was later than the rest of you getting back. He was only *one* absent, but somehow home wasn't quite right for any of you till he arrived. When at last father brought him home in a cab it was just as though *something of yourself had arrived with him,* wasn't it? Home was complete at last.

So it is with God's great family of mankind. Everybody carries about something of everybody else with them. We all need one another if any of us are to come to our highest and best. Because Jesus knew this He prayed that all His followers might cling loyally together in the spirit of love. Not only do they need to commune with Him, but with one another. This is called by the Church "The Communion of Saints." Will you not take up His noble prayer? Shall I tell you a great and beautiful secret? *We learn to love those for whom we pray.* That is, if we really pray, because "God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in Him." How can you come to be one in Love with all the Church of Christ unless you pray for all its members?

The Church of Christ throughout the world, boys and girls, is far from being one at the present time. There is not even unity of the

spirit between the greatest Churches of Christendom, though that is increasing. Here is a great and holy task awaiting the young soldiers of the King. That is why I write to you about it. Will you promise in your hearts that in *your* lives the King's prayer shall be answered? For in that great day the *world* will believe and the *world* will know. How lovely it will be to have had your share in bringing that about!

24

THE GREATEST ANSWER OF ALL

(A CHRISTMAS TALK)

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS to you! We have been thinking of Prayer. Think of the thousands and thousands of prayers offered to God before Jesus came. The world was full of great cruelties and wrongs and bitter sorrow and fear. And then God made answer to all the long crying of humanity, in a very wonderful way. St. John puts it like this: " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." What a wonderful gift to make!

Marie Corelli, in her novel called *Temporal Power,* tells the story of a King who, whilst happily enjoying the life of his court and throne, heard rumors and rumblings of great trouble amongst his people. Being a really good King he hit upon a clever plan. He left his throne

and court disguised as a working man, and went and lived as a workman amongst the poor of his country. He saw exactly how they lived, the terrible hardships they had to suffer he too endured, the wrongs and tyranny of those in high position were made plain to his eyes. He joined himself to the band of those brave, honest, but humble men who were trying to secure justice and right. His noble enthusiasm won their hearts, and he rose to be their leader. At last, when they were on the point of winning their hearts' desire, he revealed himself as their King, and flung all his authority and power into the scale on their behalf, and so the cause of right prevailed.

Another writer tells a thrilling story of a young Prince of the German Empire of the Middle Ages—Prince Roland. At that time the Rhine was blocked to commerce by the robber-barons in their great castles, and the government of the realm was held greedily in the corrupt hands of the Archbishops of Mayence, Treves, and Cologne. Young Roland slipped away from the palace and joined the Iron-workers' Guild of Frankfort. He became their leader, and by his clever strategy he reduced the robber-barons to helplessness, and at last gathered the power of the State into his own hands. Comrade Roland proved himself "every inch a king."

These stories are steps that help us to climb up to a story far more wonderful. God in His

great pity for our human need, sent His Other Dearer Self, His Son, to become a child among children, a boy among boys, a man amongst men, to live our life, and give Himself in death for very love of us all—in order that He might indeed become our Comrade-Leader—One Whose love could never more be doubted or ignored. That is the meaning of Christmas—Christ's birth. It is so wonderful and mysterious a thing that we can only dimly set it forth in human language, but it meant great sacrifice on God's part for you and me, and it means that in this Greatest Answer of all there are gathered up all other answers to our prayers. Jesus is the promise and pledge that God is on our side, and will help us in every time of need if we will have it so.

Will you think much this Christmas of the King of Heaven Who came down to earth that He might win the right to lead us in the fight against all that is wrong and evil? "The Captain of our Salvation," the New Testament calls Him, because of this great deed of His. And when in your prayers you say: "For Jesus' sake, Amen" remember that all God's answers are promised in Him—He is God's Love made plain for all to see—and for His Love's sake, for His Son's sake, God will not fail you.

The thought of this will make Christmas wonderfully happy for you, so think, think, and think again about it.

III

BEATITUDES OF THE KING

25

THE KING'S TIME STEWARD

ALL things in this world "take time." You cannot even *think,* swift as thought is, without taking time to do it. All things in God's world keep time, some of them very wonderful time. How steadily the seasons come round—spring, summer, autumn, winter! What wonderful time the sun, the moon, the tides, the days and years keep! How regularly the Fourth of July, Christmas and New Year's Day arrive! Suppose the sun turned lazy and spent half a day in bed, or suppose it arrived a week late—as I did once for a wedding! If only men and women, boys and girls, could use "time" as reverently as God's mighty servant, the sun! If only we could remember that time belongs to God, and that if we waste it we are hindering and disappointing Him, I think we should find one of the secrets of a better and happier life.

I heard, not long ago, of a clever and wise boy who found a good way of remembering this. He was busy at the house of a little girl friend, helping her cut out a picture puzzle. Suddenly the girl, whose name was Joyce, jumped up, crying, "Oh dear, here I am stealing again!" Ned looked at her wonderingly. "What do you mean?" he asked. Then Joyce told him this story.

There was once a very eccentric old man who every one said was a miser. The minister and his friends at the church had all tried to talk to him about Christian Stewardship—which means that all we have is really God's, and should be used for Him—but it did not seem to make him any better. A little boy of eight years old, however, knew this old miser and *loved* him, too! One day he went to visit him, and when the old man opened the door the little fellow took him by the hand and led him to a "grandfather's clock" that stood in the hall. "Which is God's part?" asked the little chap, pointing at the clock. The old man didn't understand, so the boy went on: "Mother says God gives us every day, and that part of the time belongs to Him, and if we do not give it to Him, we are robbers!"

Now, that old man thought a good deal about what this boy said, and the next time the little lad called at the house he found over the clock these words, "Stewardship Clock," and the old man said to him, "That clock tells God's time, and I am going to take good care of God's time!" "But," said the boy, "it is not all God's time, is it?" "Yes," replied the old man—it was his turn to teach now—"it all belongs to Him. I shouldn't have any at all if He did not give it to me. I must learn to use it in a way that pleases and helps Him. I am His time steward. My boy," he went on, "you get a 'Stewardship Clock,' too. I have wasted a lot

of God's time, but I'm going to quit the burglar business right now." From that moment the old man was a changed man, and ever so much happier for the change.

After Joyce's story was ended, Ned went home and made a card that he hung over the clock. It bore the words, "Stewardship Clock," and a second line read, "I'm no robber." You can guess the result, I expect. Ned became a splendid worker. Though King Jesus never actually said, "Blessed are the industrious," He said something that means the same thing: "Work, for the night is coming."

Once Ned sat up later than usual at his lessons. His mother asked him why. He replied: "I borrowed some time to-day, mother, to go and see Jack, who is ill, so I am paying it back now." Are you surprised that he beat the other boys at lessons as well as sports?

Some time afterwards Ned had another idea. His mother noticed that on Saturday night the card on the clock was turned over, and instead of "Stewardship Clock," there were the words "God's Clock." Ned, asked to explain, said that he felt that whilst all our time is given to us by God, and must be used well therefore "yet God also wants us to give part of our time to Him specially, and this is what Sunday is for." What do you think of that idea? A good use of time and a good use of Sundays—what a difference that would make to the year!

Every day of this New Year is a bright new

gift from God to you. Will you not use His gifts as His stewards? Remember, *time is life.* A great man said once these beautiful words—store them in your memory:

" Lo! here hath been dawning
Another blue day;
Think! wilt thou let it
Slip useless away? "

Be a time steward for your King.

26

THE KING'S HAPPINESS

THOSE great sayings of our King Jesus are called the Beatitudes or Blessings, because each saying begins with the word " Blessed." This word means simply " happy," or " prosperous." It is used in Greek writings for the " well-to-do." When we speak of some one getting on in the world, we are using the idea that the Greeks expressed by this word *makarios,* or " blessed."

The word " blessed " is better than the word " happy," because it brings to our minds that deeper, richer tone in happiness that Jesus has taught us. Jesus was " divinely happy," not " happy " in a cheap, selfish way; and so the " happiness " He offers to you and me is more than ordinary happiness—it is " blessedness."

It is good for us to remember, boys and girls,

that the King we serve is the King of Happiness. The teaching of our Lord is full of joy. John the Baptist was stern and forbidding, full of fierce words against the wickedness of the people, but Jesus was happy and bright, even at times comical in what He said. His parables are full of the joy of life. They are bright with banquet and song and dance. He taught that His disciples should not fast, but should rather be as happy as folk at a wedding. He called Himself the Bridegroom!

Jesus loved the bright, happy things of nature —the flowers, the birds, the cornfields, the dear dumb creatures. But the happiness of our King was of a special quality.

1. *It was a happiness from within.* Our King's happiness did not depend on circumstances—on whether the sun was shining or no. He made His own sunshine, and made it for others as well as Himself. His joy was one the world could not take away. Have you the King's happiness? There are boys and girls who are most sadly dependent on what happens outside them as to whether they shall be happy or sad. They are slaves of their surroundings.

The ship pulled into harbor. Everybody wanted to see it. It was not a big ship, but a very gallant one. It was the *Foam,* and was *en route* for the South Pole—for the world of ice and snow. But the bravest thing on board that ship was not a man, but a little bird. A little golden canary was there in its bright little cage,

going to the Pole! Brave little bird! What a terrible difference between the sunny Canary Islands and the bleak land of ice and frost! Piercing winds, driving storms, frozen glaciers—and a *canary* going there!

And the records say that he *sang* there, which is braver still. His little song cheered the men amid the vast loneliness, his golden feathers and his golden voice brought a breath of warmth upon the bleakness of the land.

Is there not a lesson here for boys and girls?

2. *The happiness of Jesus was made up in part of suffering.* Jesus knew how to be happy though bearing the burdens of others' trouble or the persecution of wicked men. We are told that He " endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before him." Before He set out from the upper room to go to Gethsemane, He sang a hymn with His disciples. His joy seems to mount higher and higher as He passes deeper into the pain and sacrifice of the Cross, until it is crowned in that wonderful cry of triumph: " It is achieved! It is finished! "

Have you found the joy that can last even through pain and sacrifice? It is the joy of love—the joy that makes people happy to suffer for the help and saving of others. Do you remember Sir Richard Grenville's great words on board *The Revenge?*

> *" With a joyful spirit I,*
> *Sir Richard Grenville, die."*

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SENDING OUT THE TWELVE

That is the joy which lies in Christlike devotion to duty.

3. *It was a happiness born of goodness.* The happiness of Jesus sprang from His character. It was because of what He was—poor in spirit, meek, a lover of right, merciful, peaceable, pure —that He was so invincibly happy. These are His great secrets of happiness, and they all come to one thing. To be happy we must be good, and must try to make the world good as quickly as possible. The great kill-joy of life is not religion, boys and girls, as so many foolish people think; it is sin and wrongdoing. Even if sin is not found out by other people, it destroys the inward spring of happiness because the soul *knows itself to be unworthy.* To be good you must look to Jesus, love Him and obey Him, and thus you will find, just as He promised, the King's own happiness. "These things I say unto you that my joy may be in you and that your joy might be full." Will you yourselves not try it?

27

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

YOU may have learned these Beatitudes at school, boys and girls, and have grown a little tired of them. Will you give them a fresh chance with you now? Look at this first one.

"Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

This word "happy" really means what it says. Here is the first great secret of Jesus for happiness for you. It doesn't mean simply that Jesus thinks you ought to be happy if you are "poor in spirit." It means *that you will be happy*—honor bright—if you once succeed in reaching this state of mind.

Poor in spirit does not mean poor-spirited in the sense of being mean or cowardly or nervous. Jesus was never like that, was He? In St. Luke the word "poor" stands alone, but it was not "lack of money" that was in the mind of Jesus when He spoke thus. It was the difference between the humility of the poor and the pride of the rich that He was thinking about. The rich ask much from life—they make great claims for themselves; they say, "We are rich; we have need of nothing." But the poor ask little from life—they make no great claims for themselves; they know themselves poor and in need; they have a sense of loss, and they bear themselves humbly. This, of course, is not true of all rich people or of all poor people, but it is the tendency, at any rate, that is likely to mark people who are rich or poor.

So if we put the word "unselfish" in place of *poor in spirit*, we should be nearer the truth of what Jesus meant, remembering that the truly unselfish soul is humble too.

The first secret of the King's happiness, then,

is to be small in your own sight, to think of others before yourself, to be unselfish.

What this really means has been told very beautifully in a story I once read. It was about a girl, Ailie Munro, whose parents were too poor to dress her very prettily—she often had to wear shabby dresses. She worked so hard, however, at her lessons that she was at the top of her class. Then the great event of the school year came round—the prize-giving—and she was chosen to recite the prize poem in German, "The Erl King." She was very proud and happy at being so honored, but all her joy was suddenly cast down by overhearing her fellow-scholars say that they were sorry she was chosen, because she dressed so shabbily. They thought another girl—rich, beautiful Phyllis Buchanan—should have been chosen.

Ailie went home from school very sad at heart, and that evening, as she read her New Testament for comfort, she came upon this great "secret of happiness." "I wonder what it is to be poor in spirit," she said to herself. She decided that it meant being "destitute of pretension, lowly, and humble, ready to renounce for others." Then she read in another old volume these beautiful words:

"My son, make it no matter of thine if thou see others honored and advanced, but thyself condemned. Lift up thy heart into Heaven to Me, and the contempt of men on earth will not grieve thee."

That did it. Ailie made up her mind to ask the German teacher to allow Phyllis to recite the poem. This she did the next day, and although the German teacher protested, saying that her "bronunciation" was better than Phyllis's, he nevertheless gave in to her entreaty.

The great day arrived. Relatives and friends gathered in the great hall of the college. Phyllis Buchanan was dressed as prettily and richly as possible. Poor Ailie sat in a quiet corner, with the simple white dress she had worn for three years' prize-givings. At last the great moment came, and Phyllis began to recite "The Erl King." All went well till about half-way through, and then a pause told Ailie that Phyllis had forgotten the words. In another moment the audience would have noticed it, but as quietly as the murmur of a breeze the right word came floating to Phyllis in a whisper that only one or two could hear. Ailie had come to her rescue. The situation was saved.

Phyllis never knew who it was helped her at that moment. Ailie said nothing to her about it. Ailie was not thinking of herself at all. But in Ailie's heart there arose a great and mysterious happiness. Her unselfishness had been crowned by her ready help of the girl whom others had preferred to herself. It was like the "crowning of a king" in her heart, so wonderful was her joy. She knew then how right Jesus was when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

She felt as if she had suddenly broken into Heaven, and all its glory lay round about her.

You can have the same experience, dear children, if you will learn of Him Who is " meek and lowly in heart." *When self goes, God comes.* Have you not found it so at some moment of real unselfishness?

28

THE MOURNERS

THIS sounds strange, does it not? " Happy are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Who can be happy when mourning, or, as the word means, lamenting?

I told you that the King's happiness was of a strange quality. This just shows how wonderfully happy Jesus is. *Nothing sorrowful can quench His joy.* He is always quite sure that every unhappy event only makes at last for greater happiness. The great poets agree with Him. Robert Browning wrote:

" For evil, so much good the more."

Shelley wrote:

" If winter comes, can spring be far behind? "

This is why Jesus tells us here that if we

mourn, for any reason whatever, we shall not find it the end of all happiness. God is too good for that. He is always "working all things together for good to them that love him."

Now, when Jesus used this word "mourn," I think He had three kinds of people in view. He would mean, of course, the people who had lost dear ones in death. Of these He would be thinking, "How happily surprised they will be at last to find that death is only the dark gateway to nobler life." "All their sorrow will be turned to joy."

But then He would also mean the people in whose lives there was trouble or pain of any kind. You can mourn the loss of health or of fortune.

Now, many people do not think of God whilst all goes well with them. Boys and girls are sometimes like that, too, I fear. They don't think much of mother and dad when they are well and happy and have plenty of pocket-money. But if Mary falls sick, or Tom smashes his bicycle, or Jack runs out of cash, then they want mother or dad to "comfort" them. Read Psalm 107 sometime. It's all about folk who never think of God till they are in distress. The author talks about such people going for a voyage and finding themselves overtaken by a storm: "*Then* they cry unto the Lord in their trouble."

And yet God is so generous that even then He will help, although through all their happy time

these people forgot Him. "And he bringeth them out of their distresses." Well, boys and girls, if folk will not get to know God when the sun is shining and everything is pleasant, we can afford to say that it is a good thing for them when things go wrong and their thoughts are brought back to Him. "Blessed are the mourners, for they shall be comforted." This is one part of Christ's meaning. All trouble will help to bring us nearer to God if we will let it.

It reminds me of a story of a great scientist who had a little girl of whom he was very fond. But, strangely enough, she was a rather selfish little girl, and treated him very coldly. Often and often he would look at her wonderingly, finding it hard to feel so much love for her whilst she seemed to love only herself. I think God must often feel like that, don't you, when He looks at us?

Then the scientist had to go on a long journey across the world to make some inquiries about volcanic disturbances, and he took his family with him.

One day they set out for a walk amongst the mountains, one of which was volcanic. Its hidden fires threw a lurid glow upon the sky as they were returning home in the gathering dusk. The darkness deepened as they plunged into a ravine whose rocky sides rose high on each hand.

The scientist's little daughter came running to her father and put her hand in his and clung to it. Presently she begged to be lifted into his

arms. Nestling there, she put her arms about his neck and hung there with mingled feelings of fear and safety. The great man's heart rejoiced to know that at last his little girl felt her need of him, and that out of her fear and need a new love was being born towards him.

That is often so with us and God, dear children. We have no use for Him while all is well, but when things go wrong, we are led to cry for Him. But that is better than if we remained prosperous without God, and it leads at last to a deeper, greater joy.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

But there is another kind of people that I believe Jesus had in mind. His first great secret of happiness is unselfish modesty—being poor in spirit. Now, any one like that always has a sense of being less worthy than others. His faults are apt to loom up large before him. He cares more than others do about the flaws in his character. He is burdened by a sense of loss and imperfection when he thinks of the perfect life. He is like a mourner lamenting the failure of his better self. And so Jesus utters for him this message of encouragement: "Blessed are they that mourn"—they that lament their spiritual need—"for they shall be comforted."

29

THE MEEK

THE meaning of this beatitude, boys and girls, lies near to that of the first, but with this difference—that the beatitude of the poor in spirit refers mainly to the condition of the soul, whereas this beatitude of the meek refers mainly to the soul's conduct towards others.

The greatest mistake people make about "meekness" is to think that it is the same as "weakness." To be "meek" is to be modest and quiet. It calls for splendid self-control and the rejection of pride. It is not easy for us to be meek, but hard; and it takes a lot of courage. Perhaps Jesus was thinking here of the way men and women, boys and girls, fight and quarrel and push to obtain happiness. You know, perhaps, the kind of boy who is always anxious and greedy to get the utmost pleasure for himself. Such a sad condition grows on people who indulge in it, and out of such the miser is made; and every miser, as his name shows, is on the way to becoming *miser-able*. Such folk are never satisfied—they always want more and more.

It is "the meek" that "shall inherit the earth." A greedy person quickly ceases to be pleased with what he has got already, and wants something more, and he takes no delight in what others obtain. The meek-minded man, on the other hand, thinks so little of himself and so

much of others that he takes delight in all they possess; he thoroughly appreciates their gardens, their goods, their fortune, as well as his own humble possessions.

In this way he "inherits" the whole earth. Being easily pleased by reason of his good-nature, he is pleased indeed.

Do not imagine, then, boys and girls, that you have to push and fight and quarrel to obtain happiness. When people try to get ahead of you in their greed, don't envy them or imitate them. That kind of thing is not true strength. It is not what Jesus would do.

Jesus was once talking to some Pharisees and their friends at a banquet to which they had been invited. He had noticed what a rush some of them made for the best seats at table, the seats of honor near to the host. So Jesus poked a little fun at them. He warned them against behaving like that, in case some great one should come later than themselves and their host should have to say to them, "Give this man place," and they, with shame, would have to take the lower place. "When thou art bidden," He went on, "sit down in the lowest place, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, 'Friend, go up higher,' then shalt thou have honor."

Isn't it true, boys and girls, that we all dislike the conceited person? Well, meekness is the opposite of conceit, and draws to itself reward just as surely as conceit draws to itself dislike.

Did you ever hear the story of "The Defenceless Sheep"?

Once in the long ago a sheep lifted its face to God, and complained of the wickedness and cruelty of wild beasts and of men towards him and towards his kind.

God listened in deepest sympathy, for He "loveth all things great and small." But to the gentle sheep's lament God replied:

"Very well, I will give you the fierce teeth of the wolf, that you may bite again."

"Nay, nay," cried the sheep, "make me not like so foul and cruel a foe. I might become wolfish had I a wolf's fangs."

"Then will I give you the claws of the lion, that you may fear no creature."

"I pray Thee no, O Lord," cried the sheep again. "Such sharp talons are too strong a temptation; I, too, might tear the innocent. Besides, many creatures that now love me would flee from me."

"Then it must be the sting of the serpent," said the Creator.

"Indeed, indeed, if Thou wilt have mercy—no, my Lord," protested the sheep once more. "To throw poison into another's life I could not endure to do. To become the feared and hated snake would break my heart."

"But, dear creature mine," saith the Lord, "do not men say that if you would not be hurt you must hurt again?"

"Then, dear Lord," replied the sheep, "for-

give my prayer and take no heed to my complaint. I see now that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it, and to be loved is better than to be feared."

"So be it," murmured the Divine Voice. "I, too, am called the Lamb."

30

THE RIGHTEOUS

A SAVAGE chief, who had been very kind and good to a white man, was asked by him: "Why did you treat me so kindly?" He replied, rubbing his chest gently: "Make me feel all nice in here." He was not far from the beautiful meaning of this beatitude. There is no joy so keen, so pure, as the joy of those who do what is right—the happiness of the righteous. The way to feel *good* is to be good and do good. The way to feel *right* is to be right and do right. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

But the first and greatest step towards *being* right and good is to love right and good, to *desire* it with pure and fervent desire, or, as Jesus puts it, to "hunger and thirst" after righteousness.

You see, Jesus is still thinking of the "poor in spirit," the people who have a humble view of

themselves and long to be better, and He is still thinking of the mourners who lament their unworthiness, and of the meek who are gentle and modest. These are just the souls to have a great desire to be right and good, and Jesus just loves them for that pure and beautiful desire, and He makes them the great promise that they shall be satisfied.

Now, boys and girls, do you really love being good? If not, I am sure it is because you have some false notion of what *right* and *good* is. It is nothing namby-pamby nor mean nor dull. It is being pure, and truthful, and just, and kind, and honest and brave. It is daring to do right and being true.

Unless you are really *keen* about this, you will not have much chance of succeeding when temptation comes. No boy who takes purity half-heartedly, or truthfulness lightly, can remain pure or truthful for long. The great writer who says, "There is no purity that is not passionate, there is no virtue that is not enthusiastic," is right, isn't he? Fancy any one being just a little bit honest. Imagine any one being half brave. Suppose a boy said, "I don't tell black lies, I only tell gray ones or white ones," what would you think of his truthfulness? Don't be satisfied with yourselves, boys and girls, until you can honestly feel that you love goodness.

"We needs must love the highest
When we see it."

If you don't love it, perhaps you haven't seen it properly.

Of course, Jesus is a great example in this love of right. Nothing could tempt Him to betray it. Read the story of the temptations again. No pangs of hunger or thirst, no threat of danger, no bribe of the kingdoms of the world, could prevail to make Him disobey the right. He is the Beloved Captain of our salvation.

There is an ancient story of a beautiful princess who was loved by a brave young prince. But the prince's brothers were jealous of him and each plotted to disguise himself as the beloved prince, and so capture the princess. But she learned of their plot, and to protect herself she had the road leading up to her castle gate paved with pure shining gold. The princess thought that the evil brothers would think of themselves before anybody else, and so would be attracted by the gold. They would scarcely care to batter with their horses' hoofs the gold they loved so much. But her true lover would reck nothing of golden pavements or any other treasure before herself.

Sure enough, as each false prince came galloping to the castle, he was fascinated by the golden roadway, and, being a lover of gold and thinking to save it for himself, each one turned his horse aside and rode to the castle by the grass path. But each one rode away unsatisfied.

Presently the true lover came swiftly up on his charger. He scarcely so much as glanced at the

golden road. Over it he thundered, stopping for nothing, till he stood before the treasure of his heart, his beloved princess.

Boys and girls, God seeks to be desired and loved like that. For to love right and goodness is just to love the character of God. He is love, He is truth, He is right. Nothing must stand in the way of our desire for Him.

" He loves to be longed for, He longs to be sought;
For He sought us Himself with such longing and love."

There is a boy I know who is big and strong, and folk say it is because he is so fond of fruit, and certain fruits contain what are called " vitamines "—life-giving substances. Who was it wrote of " the fruits of the Spirit " ? And what are they? Look up your New Testament and see, and, as we say, " Let your mouth water for them."

And if we let our hearts go out to Him thus, hungering and thirsting for His affection, He will see to it that we are satisfied. He will give us His own Spirit and make us true children of God.

31

THE MERCIFUL

WE all need mercy. We all need that kindness which forgives us when we have done wrong, or made mistakes, or failed in our duty. We all need the love which takes pity upon our wants and needs. However young you are, you know that, unless allowance had been made from time to time for your faults and failings, you would have been most unhappy. There can be no real happiness except to those who know and feel they are forgiven. And we need God's mercy most because every wrong we do to one another is done also to God. Here Jesus is telling us that if we would obtain that mercy we must ourselves show mercy. " Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

The terrible thing about sin, boys and girls, is that it is contrary to God's nature and spirit, and gives us always the feeling of being wrong with Him, as though a dark cloud were between us, His children, and Him, our Father.

Now, since He is love, the moment we open our hearts to the Spirit of Love by being kind and tender to others, this feeling of His displeasure and absence begins to disappear, and the feeling of His approval and presence returns. This is forgiveness—it is God restoring us to Himself, proving His mercy by His presence

with us again. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." So that our own mercy from God depends very strictly upon our mercy towards one another; and how beautiful mercy is! It shows such splendid self-conquest, such courage in checking one's desire for revenge, such great mindedness in seeing the need of others as well as one's own.

But having mercy, being merciful, is not only forgiving others: it is giving forth to others whatever help you can. Did you ever hear of the School for Sympathy?

Isn't that a strange school? One of our great essayists tells us all about it. The principal's name was Miss Beam—just the sort to let light into anybody's mind, eh? If you were to visit Miss Beam's school, this is what would happen. You would go to the window commanding the large garden and playground, and Miss Beam would ask you: "What do you see?" And you would reply: "I see a lot of happy children in some beautiful grounds, but what puzzles me is that they are not all as healthy and active as I would like to see. I see one poor thing being led about—some trouble in her eyes, I suppose—and there are two more in the same condition—and, oh, there is a little girl with a crutch just under the window—what a hopeless cripple she is!"

And then Miss Beam would laugh—yes, laugh heartily, and say: "Oh, no, she is not really lame, you know. This is her lame day. In the

course of the term every child has one blind day, one lame day, one deaf day, one maimed day, one dumb day. During the blind day their eyes are bandaged absolutely, and it is a point of honor not to peep. The bandage is put on overnight—they wake blind. This means they need assistance in everything, and the other children lead them about."

And then you would go into the playground, and going up to one of the little girls playing "blind," you would say: "Don't you ever peep?" "Oh, no, that would be cheating," is the answer you would get. "But I'd no idea it was so awful to be blind," the little one would say. "One feels one is going to be hit by something every moment. It's such a relief to sit down." "Are your guides kind to you?" you ask. Back comes the reply: "Pretty good; *not so careful as I shall be when it's my turn. Those who have played 'blind' already are the best.*" One visitor to this school said on leaving: "While I was steering those little 'blind' ones about I found I was ten times more thoughtful already than I thought I ever could become."

If only all the world could be made a school for sympathy. Do you think enough of the boys and girls who are less fortunate than you—of the crippled and poor, and the blind and the sad? Jesus went about doing good, showing God's pity to all who were in need. Is that why He was so sure that His Heavenly Father was with Him?

The God of Love comes and dwells in every loving heart. May you obtain the mercy of His continual presence!

32

THE PURE

THIS is the crowning beatitude, boys and girls! It shows us the soul at its best, and possessing the greatest reward—the vision of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

How do we *see* God? Not by our physical sight, do we? Jesus said, "God is a spirit," and a spirit is not visible to the eyes we carry in our faces. We see God with the heart or with the soul of us. We see Him with our understanding. God is not the only person we see in this way. *We see one another like this.* You and I are just as invisible as God in our real selves, and we can never truly see each other till our hearts, our real selves, are seeking for each other. There are other things we *see* only with the eyes of our mind—the motion of the earth, for example, and many other facts of science that are too small or too big to be seen with the physical eye.

The fact is that "the heart" or "the soul" is our instrument for knowing and seeing God. So that this beatitude is like some one saying,

"Blessed is he whose telescope lens is entirely clean and pure, for he shall see the stars truly."

Are our hearts pure? It is all very well to be clean in body. That helps a great deal, but even then mother looks at your neck, doesn't she? Suppose she looked into the secret place in your heart. Young folk, guard your imaginations from all that is unclean and unholy. Keep your soul a spotless mirror in which may be reflected the face of your Maker.

You have approached, perhaps, at some time or other, a photograph or picture to look at it, and your breath has accidentally fallen upon the glass and has clouded and blotted out the face you desired to see. That is what happens when we admit unclean thoughts and desires into our hearts. The eyes of the soul find their vision blurred and misted, and the face of God is hidden from us.

Up on the rocky coast of Labrador a little boy named Davy lived with his father and mother. Mother was very delicate, and father earned their living on the rough seas that break upon that rugged shore. Although Davy was nine years old, his mother loved to nurse him upon her lap as the twilight deepened into night, often kissing him as though she could not let him go. Davy, young as he was, felt that his mother was like one bound on a long journey, and he was right. Slowly but surely she was dying, growing weaker and weaker, slipping away out of his life into the glorious life of Heaven.

One evening Davy looked up and found his mother gazing so searchingly into his eyes.

"What are you doing that for, mum?" said Davy. "What are you looking for?"

"For your heart," came the strange reply, and there was something in his mother's voice and eyes that made Davy very solemn. Then she said: "Look into your mother's eyes, lad, and say this after me. 'My mother—'"

"My mother—" repeated Davy quietly.

"Looked into my heart—"

"Looked into my heart," said he.

"And found it brave—"

"An' found it brave—"

"And sweet—"

"An' sweet—"

"Willing for the day's work—" she continued.

"Willing for the day's work—" repeated Davy.

"And harboring no shameful hope."

"An' harboring no shameful hope."

Again and again Davy's mother made him repeat it. Then at last she said: "Ah, but you'll forget."

"No, no," cried Davy, "I'll not forget," and he rattled off:

"My mother—looked into my heart—an' found it brave an' sweet, willing for the day's work, an' harboring no shameful hope."

"I'll not forget," he whispered, "I'll not forget."

And Davy did not forget; even when he had grown to be a big, strong man, he still felt his mother's eyes looking from Heaven upon his heart, and he tried always to keep it " brave and sweet, willing for the day's work, and harboring no shameful hope."

What about the eyes that look from Heaven upon your heart? What do they see—those ever-seeing eyes of the God of Love?

33

THE PEACEMAKERS

OUR King, boys and girls, rejoices in no prouder title than the Prince of Peace. He, the perfect child of God, came in order to make peace between God and man, and between men and men the wide world over.

The cause of world-wide peace is the cause of God. Never forget it, never be false to it. Here Jesus tells us that if we would be called truly " the children of God "—and what a proud title it is!—we must be lovers and makers of peace. " Happy are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Certainly the quarrelsome folk are miserable enough, aren't they? The prizes of life, boys and girls, are not for those who fight each other for them, but for those who will help each other

Co-operation, not strife, is the Christian's watchword.

There is nothing more beautiful than peacemaking. To come between two people who are angry with each other and get them to clasp hands in happy, helpful friendship—isn't that worth doing? That is God's work, and the work for you.

Will you see a final end to war in your lifetime, children? I wonder. It depends on you. Fancy! *No more war!* No more sad farewells of husbands and fathers as they march away to the fearful risks of the battlefields! No more manufacture of thousands of widows and orphans who weep in vain for their loved ones' return! No more horrible air-raids, pouring death from God's sky upon little children! Must not God be terribly sad and angry at the awful deeds of war?

There is no better way in which you and I can serve God in these days, than by pledging ourselves to be His peacemakers, and to oppose all who delight in war or are careless of human brotherhood.

The present century opened with a beautiful and thrilling incident, full of promise for the overthrow of war. In the year 1900 war was threatened between Chili and Argentina. The two countries which, as the boys and girls who are good at geography will know, lie upon each side of the Andes mountains in South America, began to make great preparations for fighting

each other. Heavy taxes were placed on the people, guns and ammunition were feverishly manufactured.

But as the season of Eastertide drew near, a good bishop of Argentina, named Benevente, found his conscience deeply troubled by it all. It seemed to him that the voice of God was calling to him, Benevente, to be His peacemaker, and so prove himself a child of God indeed. So on Easter Day, he made a great appeal to the people to put away their wicked purpose of war, for the sake of the Christ Who died and rose for the sake of *all men.* This started a great crusade of peace through the country. It was heard of in Chili, and a Chilian bishop took up the message and began preaching up and down that country, calling on the people to make peace instead of war. Great petitions were sent by the people of both countries to their governments. So great was the pressure of this opinion, so loudly did the people clamor for peace, that the governments invited King Edward VII of England to decide between them. The result of that decision was a treaty that pleased everybody, and in 1902 a further treaty was signed, promising to settle all disputes for the next ten years in this sensible way. After ten years—in 1912—this treaty was renewed.

But that is not the end of this story of peacemaking. So great was the relief of the people of Chili and Argentina at being delivered from the burdens and horror of war, that a mighty

thanksgiving to God was planned between the two countries.

A great bronze statue of Christ was cast, made from the metal of the scrapped guns. It was carried by immense labor right up the Andes mountains to the highest pass between the two countries, and there it was set up on the boundary line. The service of dedication on March 13th, 1904, will never be forgotten. Amid great rejoicing the Chilian and Argentinian military bands and escorts passed over on to each other's soil, and with the singing of praises to God the great statue was unveiled.

It is a mighty noble figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, with His feet resting upon the globe of the earth in prophecy of world-wide triumph for the Prince of Peace. Written on the base of the statue are these great words:

"Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust, than Argentines and Chilians break the peace to which they have pledged themselves at the feet of Christ the Redeemer."

If only the nations could but remember this Divine Figure standing on the roof of the world, appealing to all men to love each other for His sake, there would be no more war.

Do not you forget, young folk! Be peacemakers, and so become God's happy children.

34

THE PERSECUTED

TO have everybody against you is very miserable, is it not? Perhaps you have tasted that. But how wonderful must be the joy that Christ can give when it makes people willing and even happy to be treated like that for His sake!

"Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The one thing you cannot do with the great martyrs of our Christian history is to pity them. They are too noble and great for that. They are so entirely without pity for themselves. Like Jesus, the King of the martyr band, they are full of pity for their persecutors.

After all, any boy of spirit, if he had to make the choice, would rather have been brave William Tyndale, burned at the stake, than one of the miserable, wicked men who betrayed him to his foes.

Notice that Jesus closes His list of beatitudes here with one which *tests* the loyalty of His disciples. To be a Christian ought to be a heroic thing. If it isn't in these days, it may be because we are not faithful enough—we do not attack evil as we should, or see clearly enough what God's will demands in the world. Don't

be afraid of the ridicule of your chums, boys and girls, or of older people, when you know you are right.

If you give in to them, they will secretly despise you. The most horrible thing any one can ever be is a selfish coward, afraid to be true to what he knows is right. That way lies terrible unhappiness. Supposing everybody was afraid to tell the truth because other people might object! However would the world get on?

The true disciple of Jesus longs for an opportunity of proving his love in sacrifice. We always find joy in making sacrifices for those we love.

Do you know the story of St. Francis of Assisi? He was one of the bravest disciples that Jesus ever had. Here is one story about him that will help you to be brave, too.

It was long ago in the days of the crusades. Princes and nobles and soldiers were pouring into Palestine from Europe to recapture Jerusalem from the heathen Moslems. St. Francis did not believe this was the right way to go about it. He hated war and loved peace, and he wanted very much to go to Palestine to show both sides something of the love of God.

Taking with him about twenty companions, he crossed the mountains from Italy to the coast, and sought a ship at the port of Ancona. Having no money, he had to rely upon the kindness of some sea-captain; and at length he found one, but learned that there was room only for eleven

of his companions. They all wanted to go so badly, to show God's love in caring for the wounded, that St. Francis did not know how to choose.

As he walked along the beach, however, he met a little boy, and as he loved children, he said to him: "Little boy, canst thou count?" "Oh yes," said the boy, "I can count up to twenty." "Then," said St. Francis, "pick out eleven of these brethren of mine to cross the seas with me. God will guide thee." What a proud moment it was for that little boy, though, perhaps, he little knew how great an enterprise he was engaged in. "You, and you, and you!" he said, pointing at them with his finger and keeping count.

Thus the little band was chosen, and to the battlefields they came at length. Many are the stories told of their adventures and of their loving care for all wounded and dying men. Even many of the Moslem foes treated them with respect when they learned that their only desire was to help all who were in need.

But one day St. Francis and two of his band were captured by the enemy while wandering over a battlefield, and cruelly beaten. Then they were dragged before the Prince of the Moslem Army, Saladin himself. The leaders of religion, who were gathered round their chief, wanted them destroyed at once, but the prince said: "Nay! Let us hear what they have to say. I desire only the truth."

Then it was that St. Francis issued a famous challenge to the heathen priests. "My lord," he said, "let a fire be kindled on the floor of the Palace, and let these men pass through the fire, and I will pass through the fire, and whichever shall come out safely, his God you shall serve!"

The Moslem teachers shrank back in fear and trembling at the very thought, but St. Francis stood straight and ready.

The prince did not agree to the ordeal, but he sent St. Francis away in safety. The story shows us, however, how much St. Francis was prepared to suffer for his Master's sake.

Are your faith and courage so strong as to make you willing to suffer something for Christ's sake? That is one of the ways to perfect happiness.

35

THE GIVERS

THERE is another beatitude of our King's, boys and girls, that is not reported in the Gospels. You will find it in the Acts of the Apostles. It is preserved for us by St. Paul. In Acts 20: 35, he says: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" This shows us that there may very well be many sayings of our Lord's that have not been handed down to us in the Gospels. All we know of His teaching

makes it easy for us to believe that this further beatitude also fell from His lips.

Do we really believe it to be true? Do we believe that it is happier to give than to receive? The best way to test the matter is to try the joy of giving, then you will know for certain. Jesus seems quite sure about it. The generous heart is the happy one in His view. We call the selfish person *mean*, we speak of the generous as large-hearted, and there is a great deal in those measurements. Such descriptions show us that the great experience of humanity proves that selfishness makes us smaller for joy to dwell in, but kindness and generosity make us bigger for joy to dwell in.

Of course, it is *real* giving Jesus means, not the sort of giving that has a selfish purpose behind it or is careless of others' good.

You remember how strict our King is in His judgment of giving. The greatest gift is the one that carries the most sacrifice. Did you ever hear of the farthing that turned to gold?

A poor woman, a widow, was once much troubled because the king of her country had asked all his subjects to bring him presents, and she had only a farthing to give. The rich men brought great sums of gold, some brought precious jewels, others brought cattle and costly merchandise. How could she take only a farthing? Then she thought: "But the king is wise; he will not think that I love him only a farthing's worth. I'll take it." So the woman

brought her farthing to the king and put it into the royal hand. Then, weeping for shame at so small a gift, she turned away; but the king called to her and said, holding up a golden coin: "You gave me this?" "No, sire, I gave you but a farthing," replied the widow. The king smiled. "Let me place it in your hand again," he cried. He did so, and behold, it was only a farthing. "Now give it to me once more, good dame," said the king; and trembling the old lady put it back into his hand. It shone, the purest gold!

Now, that story is a legend. It contains the truth, but it is not true. Here is another story which is perfectly true, and yet just as wonderful. Jesus was one day watching the collection-box in the Temple at Jerusalem. I wonder how we would like Him to watch the missionary collection-box at home, or the collection-plate as it goes round the church? Like Him to watch it! Why, He is watching it all the time, isn't He? Well, what do you think He saw that day? There was a poor widow who had only two farthings in all the world, yet so anxious was she that God's work should be done, and should not suffer by her neglect or failure, that she put both of them—a halfpenny—into the "Treasury," or collection-box. When Jesus saw what she had done, He turned to His disciples and said: "She hath cast in more than they all." The rich men had cast in great sums of money, yet this "halfpenny" equalled them all. Would

you not like a "halfpenny" as valuable as all that, equal to a fortune? What made it so valuable in the sight of Jesus? Of course you know. It was the great sacrifice it stood for. Do your gifts stand for real sacrifice? A friend was telling me the other day how proud and glad he felt when he first put his *own* penny into the collection-plate.

And there is never any knowing what wonderful things may happen to the gifts we make to the Great King. The changing of the farthing to gold is nothing to some changes that take place. A boy once brought five small barley loaves and two fishes to Jesus, and with them Jesus fed five thousand people. If you put a farthing into the missionary-box, do you know what it may turn to one day? It may actually become a doctor, or a nurse, or a preacher, working for the little boys and girls of China, or India, or Africa, or the Islands of the Pacific. Isn't that a wonderful change? But don't forget that the value of your gifts depends upon whether they really cost you anything. The great artist, G. F. Watts, chose for his motto those quaint words—you can think them over: "What I spent I had; what I saved I lost; what I gave I have."

36

HOW THE CHRISTMAS TREE CAME

HAVE you ever heard the story of the first Christmas tree? In the year 724 a company of Christian pilgrims made their way slowly through the great forest-land of Central Germany. At their head marched Winfried of England, better known since by his Roman name, St. Boniface. He carried a strong staff fashioned like a cross at the top. Close beside him strode a brave young lad named Prince Gregor, on his shoulder an axe, with broad shining blade. Suddenly the road opened upon a broad heath, at the further end of which stood a hillock, crowned by a giant oak tree. There it towered far above all the other trees.

A mighty throng of people were gathered about the sacred oak, before which a great fire had been kindled. The little band of Christians advanced calmly across the heath, and Winfried's voice rang out, "Hail, ye sons of the forest. A stranger claims the warmth of your fire on a winter night."

Swiftly a thousand eyes turned to the speaker —the semi-circle opened silently—Winfried and his companions entered; it closed again behind them. There they stood close to the great stone altar before the tree, surrounded by rank on rank of men, women, and children, all clad in

purest white. An old priest, Hunrad by name, was speaking to the people: "This night the great god Thor, the god of thunder and war, to whom this oak is sacred, is angry with his people. It is long since the roots of this holy tree have been fed with blood."

A murmur of approval rose from the great multitude.

Swiftly the priest moved towards the children, and laying his hand on the foremost boy, bright and handsome, the finest of them all, he cried: "Here is the chosen one, the eldest son of the Chief, the darling of the people. Harken! Bernhard, wilt thou go to Valhalla, where the heroes dwell with the gods, to bear a message to Thor?"

The boy answered clear and swift: "Yes, priest, I will go if my father bids me."

Then the priest bound the child's eyes with a white cloth, and bade him kneel with his silver-tipped bow beside the stone altar, with his face to the east. The priest lifted aloft, with all the strength of his withered arms, the sacred black stone hammer of Thor, and swung it high above the child's head. But swifter than the falling hammer was the hand of the deliverer. Winfried's heavy staff smote the hammer with wondrous skill, and caused it to glance sideways, so that it struck sharply on the edge of the altar and split it in twain! A shout of mingled joy and awe rose from the watching crowd. As the shout died away, the leaping flames of the great

fire revealed Winfried, his face shining like an angel's, standing upon the altar.

Conflicting shouts and counsels rent the air, but at last the chief's voice obtained silence with its stern command: "Let the stranger speak!"

"This is the counsel," said Winfried. "This is the birth night of the White Christ, Son of the All-Father, Saviour of mankind. Since He has come to the world, all bloody sacrifice must cease. The power of Thor, the cruel and evil one, is broken. See! You call this tree his oak. Does he dwell here? Does he protect it? His power is broken!"

The people stirred uneasily. Hunrad lifted his head, muttering: "Thor, take vengeance! Thor!"

Winfried beckoned to Gregor. "Now, young woodsman, show thy craft. This king-tree of the forest must fall, and swiftly, or all is lost!"

Clang! Clang! The strokes rang out on the cold night air. Then the greatest wonder of Winfried's life occurred. Out of the still winter night a mighty rushing noise sounded. A strong whirling wind gripped the oak by its branches and tore it from the roots.

Winfried bowed his head in wonder and thankful prayer. Then he turned to the awe-struck people and cried: "Here is timber, already felled and split by the hand of God. On this spot you shall build with it a church of the White Christ. And here," said he, his eyes turning to a young fir tree, straight and green, "here

is the living tree, with no stain of blood upon it, that shall be a sign of your new worship. See how straight it points to the sky. Let us call it the Tree of the Christ-Child. Take it and carry it to the Chieftain's hall. You shall go no more into the forest to keep your feasts with shameful rites. You shall keep them at home, with laughter and songs, and rites of love and goodwill."

So they took the little fir tree and carried it to the Chief's home, made happy again by Bernhard's rescue. There they kindled lights among its branches, and Winfried told again the story of the Holy Babe of Bethlehem.

So began the beautiful custom of the Christmas Tree. Whenever we look upon one, let us remember the glorious courage of Winfried and young Gregor, and their great love for Jesus.

IV

STORIES OF THE KING

37

THE STORY OF REAL LIFE

WE are going now to think together about the Prince of Story-Tellers and some of the stories He told. Jesus was so fond of speaking His mind in story-form that we read "without a parable spake he not unto them."

I think Jesus was fond of story-telling because He knew that the most wonderful story that is being told is the story of Real Life. Have you ever thought of that? If those made-up stories have any value at all, it is to help to make sure that the Story of Real Life shall end happily. This is specially the purpose of the stories that Jesus made up.

In one of the psalms there is this verse: "We spend our years as a tale that is told." The man who wrote that was feeling rather sad about life, and was thinking that just as a story comes to an end at last, and all too quickly, so every life comes to its end too. Perhaps you have felt with me the sadness of finishing some thrilling story like *Robinson Crusoe* or *Treasure Island.* How wretched it felt to say good-bye to Man Friday and the brave Robinson, to Jim Hawkins, and even wicked old Pew and John Silver! And if you do read the stories three times over, it simply makes it harder still to say good-bye.

In his *Book of Fables,* Robert Louis Stevenson

makes his characters in *Treasure Island* talk as if they were real. Let us listen to them for a moment:

After the 32nd chapter of *Treasure Island* two of the puppets strolled out to have a pipe before business should begin again. "'Good morning, Cap'n,' said the first, with a man-o'-war salute. 'Ah, Silver,' grunted the other. 'You're in a bad way, Silver.'

"'Now, Cap'n Smollett,' remonstrated Silver, 'dooty is dooty, as I know, and none better; but we're off dooty now, and I can't see no call to keep up the morality business.'

"'You're a rogue, my man,' said the Captain.

"'I wouldn't set no limits to what a virtuous chara'ter might consider argument,' responded Silver. 'But I'm the villain of this tale, I am, and speaking as one seafaring man to another, what I want to know is, what's the odds?'

"'Were you never taught the Catechism?' said the Captain. 'Don't you know there's such a thing as an Author?'"

So the conversation goes on. Silver, the villain, tries to argue that since the Author made them all, there could be no real difference between the good and the bad. But the Captain holds, and we who have read the story know he was right, that the Author is on the side of the right.

"'I see he's giving you a long rope,' said the Captain, 'but I know the Author's on the side of good; he tells me so; it runs out of his pen as he

writes. Well, that's all I need to know. I'll take my chance upon the rest.

"'I'm glad enough to be Alexander Smollett, bad as he is: and I thank my stars on my knees that I'm not Silver. But there's the ink-bottle opening. To quarters!'"

Now if there must be an Author for *Treasure Island,* there must be an Author for this story of Real Life in which you and I have our places already. What a big book it is!—though perhaps you have only appeared in a few of the chapters. I wonder what difference you will make to the story? Are you one of the characters that the Author loves? He is on the side of good—are you?

Perhaps you didn't shine very well in this way in the last chapter. Well, the ink-bottle is opening again. On the bright clear new page let a new, clean, beautiful character appear for you. Why not?

"As a tale that is told." Make up your minds, boys and girls, that it shall be a story fit for every one to read and to enjoy—one that shall do them good, and be on the side of the right. For *there is an Author,* and He is on that side. A Happy New Chapter to you all every day and every year; and may we all be there to rejoice at the happy ending!

38

THE SOWER AND THE SOIL

AFTER Jesus had been preaching and teaching for about a year, the people were so eager to hear Him that they gathered in great multitudes around Him. There were all kinds of folk in these crowds, and many were moved only by idle curiosity. So Jesus changed His way of teaching. He began to teach in the form of stories which seemed to be quite simple, yet were really very deep. In this way He tested His hearers. Those who were really in earnest would puzzle over the stories, wrestle with their meaning, and arrive at the truth. Those who did not care for truth would grow impatient and turn away, and yet the story would linger in their minds, gradually, perhaps, forcing them to face the truth.

The story Jesus told on the first occasion when He used the new method is a great warning to all people to see that their hearts and minds are kept fit for the reception of truth. "A Sower went forth to sow," said Jesus, "and his seed fell upon different kinds of ground. Some seeds fell by the wayside and the birds of the air devoured them. Some fell on rocky places, and since the earth was not very deep they sprang up quickly, but, having very little root, the plants soon withered away in the scorching sun. Others fell

among thorns which grew up and choked them. But a number of the seeds fell on good ground, and these brought forth some a hundred, some sixty, some thirty fold."

We have often heard the little story, but have we applied it to our own hearts? The seed is the truth about God, which comes to us in the teaching of our Lord and King, Jesus. What kind of soil does it fall upon when it enters *our* minds? Are you, for example, a *wayside* mind? When Dean Stanley was travelling in Palestine, he made a special search of the shores of the Sea of Galilee to discover whether " the details of this story were before the eyes of Jesus as He told it." He found that a slight recess in the hillside, close upon the plain, disclosed at once and in detail every feature of the great parable. " There was the undulating cornfield stretching to the water's edge. There was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed falling on either side of it or upon it, *itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human foot.*"

Jesus says in His story that there are minds like that wayside path. The " wayside " mind is the " hardened " mind. It is so full of other traffic than that of the Word of God that it grows hardened against that Word. Perhaps you have noticed this happening. Jack, your friend, used to be quite keen about his Bible and his Sunday School and church. But other things have now captured all his attention, and his Bible goes un-

opened, his Sunday School unattended, and church is neglected. Perhaps you have even found that he is now impatient if you refer to these things—his mind is hardening against the seed of truth. Jack does not realize that in refusing the *best thoughts and feelings* he is making his mind really barren like the wayside path. Nothing of much importance and value will grow there now because the mind has grown dull towards Him Who is the true life of the mind.

Or is your mind a shallow one? Some of the seed, says Jesus, falls on rocky places, and then it springs up quickly, but withers just as quickly because it has no depth of earth. Perhaps you have known the girl who makes quick and eager response to *everything*. She has an enthusiasm —a fresh one—for every day of the week, but by the seventh day six of them are forgotten, and there's a new one taking their place! No depth! No depth! There is no satisfaction in such a mind, boys and girls. Like the shallow pool, it is soon dried up by the sun and the soul is left thirsty. People who will not *think* and *work* with their minds and draw truth deeply into themselves gradually come to discover their own empty condition, and it is a sad discovery. For a time such folk can make a brave show, and often talk very glibly, but they are found out at last. This state is due always to a great rock of lazy selfishness underneath all their show.

Or is your mind thorny? Is it full of false and mischievous ideas, such as nervous fear for self,

love of money, desire for personal fame—prickly thorns all of them, making you unkind and jealous of others?

Or is your mind good ground? That is what your King desires to see. The good ground is soft and receptive, hungry for the good seed, drawing it deep into its life so that it can take deep, strong root and bear fruit.

You have seen the field of rich golden grain. All the cold of January and rain of February and winds of March and showers of April, are for the May flowers and the golden fields of summer. Which would you rather be? Hard, shallow, thorny, or fruitful? Let your life from this moment show that you know how to choose wisely.

39

THE STORY OF THE WONDERFUL SEED

ONE of the greatest wonders of life—boys and girls—is growth! Look at yourselves, for instance. You are always poking your arms and legs further through your clothes and reducing mother to despair and father to poverty! Where does it all come from—this extra *you?* From the supreme wonder that we call Life, whose other name is God! It is not surprising, then, that when the King of Story Makers wanted to make His disciples feel the wonder of the Kingdom of God, He told them the story of

the mustard seed. This seed—the "Sinapis" as botanists call it—was the tiniest of all the seeds commonly sown by the people to whom Jesus was speaking, but it grew in a single season into a plant ten feet high, in which the birds would take shelter and even roost! No one of Christ's hearers could think of that wonder of growth without having his thoughts led directly to God.

Now, many of the Jews expected the Kingdom of God to burst suddenly and in complete perfection upon the world. They were shocked when asked to believe that any one so humble in His beginnings and social position as Jesus could be the Promised Deliverer sent by God. Probably, too, the disciples found it hard to believe at times that one who cared so little for worldly power as Jesus could ever become Lord of all the world. But we to-day are able to see the wonderful growth of the power of Jesus and of His kingdom.

Within forty days of His death three thousand people were converted to His teaching in Jerusalem alone: within four centuries all the then known world offered its homage to His Name. To-day more people worship Christ than support any other two world-religions counted together. And all this not because of force or fear, but because of the sheer beauty of His Spirit as it showed itself in His followers.

Even in your life, perhaps, you have known something of the wonderful growth of the "rule of God" in human hearts, once it gets a start.

Jesus was born in a manger—of working-class parents. He died upon a cross; but see the result as one clever writer has pictured it. He tells of a stranger from another planet who visited earth and was shown its history for the last two thousand years. He is shown the two classes of people—those who grovel only in the things that can be seen and touched, and those who seek to know the invisible things of God. He asks what have "these adorers of the Invisible" done? They look so insignificant, so powerless. He asks if they are benefactors of their kind.

While he spake all the Christian temples of the world rose upon his view, and a Diviner light overspread the face of earth and sky. "It is the Lord's Day" whispered his guide. The stranger gazed in silent wonder; for over Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar, Africa, China, India, and the islands of the sea, streets and highways filled with men and women, youths and children, on their way to the house of God.

"What mean those lights powdered thick as stars around the globe?" asked the stranger.

"Those in the firmament of life are Christian homes," replied the guide, "and those softened lights are houses of healing, called hospitals, and those kindred stars are the homes where these worshippers of the Invisible gather, feed and clothe the maimed, the blind, the orphan, the forsaken of the earth."

"What may yon shining temple be?" asked the stranger.

"It is the temple of Art, of Letters, and of Science," answered his guide, "and the angel presiding over its busy workmen is the Genius of Christianity."

"What mean those winged abodes, speeding into the shadows, with a star aloft?"

"That is the fleet of freed men going forth to rescue the bondmen of the world."

"Amazing!" cried the stranger. "From whence is the inspiring, compelling power derived?"

A clearer light fell upon the scene, and lo! stranger and guide stood beneath a world-wide tree whose branches shot over all seas and oceans and lands of earth; and all the radiant homes and sanctuaries, hospitals, and orphanages, schools and temples of light, all the armies that live to serve, branched forth from a common centre.

"You ask for the source, the root of all this," said the guide. "Stand here."

Twenty centuries ebbed out in a moment of time, and between stranger and guide there appeared a cross—the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a wonderful story of growth! Yet other chapters in that story have yet to be written—perhaps with your help—until *All the kingdoms of the world are the Kingdom of Christ!*

40

THE TARES AMONG THE WHEAT

NIGHT falls over the countryside, and with its dark cloak hides the figure of a man creeping stealthily along the hedgerow. Presently he halts by a field and then slinks into it through the hedge. Over the whole field he travels casting seed upon the soil. The seed he sows, however, is evil seed, and that is why he seeks the cover of night and sows while the farmer and his sons sleep. The days pass by and the green shoots appear through the earth, but not until the wheat is almost grown do the farmer's servants begin to see the worthless plants that are mingled with it. Then in alarm they report the matter to their master, and ask him, *"Wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" But he says to them, "Nay! lest haply while ye gather up the tares ye root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."*

By this time you will have recognized the story as the Parable of the Tares. Every story that Jesus told has a special purpose, and I think He told this story to rebuke in His disciples the ugly spirit of persecution that spoilt the religion of His day and has so terribly disgraced even Christianity at certain periods.

Our Lord did not believe that error and falsehood could be overcome by violence, but the

world unhappily nearly always does believe it. Even the disciples of Jesus would have loved to have taken vengeance into their own hands against those who opposed Him. Once when some Samaritan village would not receive Him, they asked Him to call down fire from Heaven to consume it.

But Jesus turned upon them sharply and said: "*Ye know not what spirit ye are of.*" No wonder then that Jesus tells them this story both as a warning to them not to yield to the spirit of harsh judgment that the Pharisees were all too ready to show, and as a warning to those in error and wickedness that, although Christian men may not visit judgment upon them, God's judgment, though slow, is absolutely certain.

Now this spirit of gentle love, with its confidence in the sure triumph of Truth, and its refusal to force anybody into goodness, is one of the great distinctions of our holy faith, boys and girls, and you must always cherish it. There is still here and there in the religious life of our time a tendency to persecute. If weeds are weeds, if tares are tares, they will at last be destroyed. As Gamaliel—that fine old Jewish professor—said about the first Christians, "*Let them alone, for if this counsel be of men it will be overthrown, but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow it.*" If Christians ask that toleration of the world they must also be prepared to give it.

The danger, of course, of doing what the ser-

vants wanted to do in the Parable—pulling the tares up before the time—is that good wheat might be lost and destroyed in doing it. And that is one of the great dangers of persecution. Nothing clouds our vision of truth like hatred, and you know enough history to realize how many perfectly good and noble men have been done to death for so-called error who, living, would have taught the world immortal truth.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," we say; but in saying it we prove that persecution is no right way of overcoming error. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

One of the most beautiful stories of Christian martyrdom is the story of Phocas. He lived at Sinope, on the shores of the Black Sea, about 200 years after Christ. He lived in days when the Roman Emperor ordered Christians to be hunted down and slain. One evening three strangers came to his garden gate and explained to him that they were servants of the Emperor and were looking for one Phocas whom they must put to death. He saw the men were tired, so he simply replied, "If you will enter in and rest, I will bring Phocas to you in the morning." The men retired to sleep, but Phocas rambled in his beloved garden at night. Should he fly for his life? No, he could not do that, it would be unfaithful to his Lord, he felt; also, he had promised the men and a Christian's word cannot be broken.

Then he went for some tools, and there in his

garden under the quiet stars of heaven he dug his own grave—a sweet resting-place among the flowers—in the shape of a cross! In the morning, he led the men to the grave in the garden and said to them simply, "Now, friends! I am Phocas!" The hearts of the men were deeply touched, for they loved this kindly old man; but they feared to disobey the Emperor, so they carried out their sad errand. Yet they could not help feeling how wonderful this Christian faith was that could conquer so completely the fear of death and how silly and wicked it was to kill such men.

Such a story stirs our blood with indignation against the persecutor, but it should also show us how wise, as well as generous, our Lord was in teaching His disciples never to descend to the folly of the world in this way. The sacred memory of martyrs like Phocas should plead in our hearts for perfect freedom of thought and speech, and a brave generosity towards those in error in the bright faith that Truth—Who is Christ—must conquer at last.

41

THE TREASURE HUNTERS

JESUS—The King of Story Makers—once told His disciples two lovely little stories which are much alike and yet different. One was about a man who suddenly and accidentally stumbled

upon a treasure hid in a field. It was so wonderful a treasure that at once he went home and sold all that he had—every stick of his possessions—and then went joyfully to buy the field, and so make the treasure his own. The other story was about a merchant whose business it was to travel about seeking pearls of real value which he could buy and sell again. He loved his beautiful trade in such lovely things, and when at last he saw a pearl of supreme beauty and value he could not resist it. He sold every other jewel in his possession and everything he had, in order to buy *the pearl of great price* and make it his own.

What did Jesus mean by these two charming stories? Well, I think He knew that every one of us is a born treasure hunter. He knew how we thrill to a story like *Treasure Island.* And He wants us to make sure of finding the finest treasure of all. So in these stories He warns His disciples that it does not matter what they have —there is One Treasure worth everything else! If you have it not—nothing else can really satisfy you. If you have it, you will not mind if it costs you everything. That treasure is the Kingdom of Heaven. What is this Kingdom of which Jesus was always speaking? It is not a place merely. The Kingdom of Belgium is not so many miles of land called Belgium. King Albert would not like to rule over land merely. The Kingdom of Belgium for King Albert is made up of hearts that are loyal and loving to-

wards him. So the Kingdom of God is made up of hearts that are loyal and loving towards Him. It is the Rule of God in your heart and mine and every man's. Through human hearts the Kingdom enters and conquers the world.

This Kingdom in the heart, Jesus tells us, is a great and beautiful treasure. It means God's own Presence and Power right at the centre of one's being. Must not that be wonderful?

We know, at least, how difficult it is to enjoy the happiest things in life if our own hearts are unhappy and discontented. It takes an inward treasure of peace and joy to be able to enjoy an outward treasure. The Great Treasure—the Pearl of Great Price—therefore, is the happy heart, made glad by God's own Presence and Power. If you want really to make your fortune, here it is. Some folk tumble on this accidentally. Perhaps they get very discontented with "things" and go roaming in the fields of the soul—and bump! they suddenly find the treasure hidden in the unseen.

I remember a man, who had been very, very rich, but who lost all his money at a blow, saying to me, "It was the most fortunate day of my life—for when I lost my money I found myself, and then I found God." Others come to the Pearl of Great Price gradually through other good things. At day school, Sunday School, or church they get a taste for Truth, and Love and Right—the unseen treasures of the soul; and then they find that these are crowned and per-

fected in Jesus Christ, God's Son, and through Him they find God—a real Presence and Power in their hearts. Have you found Him yet? Or are you still seeking the Great Treasure?

During the Great War there came to stay at the house of a little girl friend of mine a soldier. To this stranger my little friend gave, with her parents' permission, her own little Bible, because he had told her that he never read the Bible, and actually hadn't got one. Some weeks after he left her home and went over to France. From there he wrote a letter to say that he had been reading his little chum's Bible, as he promised her he would, and through doing so had come to believe in Jesus as his Saviour, and had given his heart to God. He went on to write about the great joy that was in his heart. My little friend was so proud and glad of having helped this big, strong man to find the Great Treasure.

All people's hearts, boys and girls, are really hungry for the Treasure of Heaven. Will you be finders as well as seekers? And help others to find it, too?

A clever writer has pointed out regarding this "treasure in the field" that the gold is *under the grass* and so often one must *dig for it*. It is so with most treasures—treasures of learning as well as gold.

It is true of God's book, the Bible, and especially the teaching of our Lord. Dig in it well, boys and girls, and find the Great Treasure.

42

THE MAN WHO LOST FORGIVENESS

IT was a terrible thing in Christ's day to be in debt—to owe somebody money you could not pay. It is so always, and boys and girls should avoid borrowing and lending money, especially at boarding school, where it is not always easy to ask the advice of older folk. But in those days it was especially dangerous, because there was very, very little forgiveness in the world. Jesus had only just come to the world and His Gospel was not yet understood. Men were therefore very cruel to one another.

Jesus tried to alter this by Himself being full of mercy, and showing also by His teaching that God was merciful, too. One of His best stories is about this matter. The King of Heaven, He said, was like a king who had a reckoning with his servants—governors of provinces and so on. During the examination a governor was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. How much is that, do you think, in our money? *Over ten million dollars!*

The man had not the money to pay this enormous debt, so the king, according to the habit of the time, ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and household, and payment to be made. But the man flung himself at the king's feet and begged for mercy so piteously that the king's heart was touched and he forgave him all

that great debt. The man was set free and went home rejoicing.

But on the way he met a man who owed money to him. It was only twenty dollars, and yet, forgetting the great mercy he had just received, he seized this man by the throat, crying: "*Pay what thou owest!*" This man, too, begged for mercy, but the man would not listen to him and flung him into prison. But such a deed, with what had gone before it, could not pass unnoticed even in those cruel times, and it was reported to the king. He summoned the governor back to his presence and, after rating him soundly, gave him a taste of his own medicine. The man lost his forgiveness when he failed to forgive in turn. And Jesus closed His little story with the solemn words: "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

You know, boys and girls, that on the river Jordan in Palestine there are two great lakes. One is the beautiful Sea of Galilee, of which Jesus was so fond; and the other, very much larger, is called for very good reason the Dead Sea. What is the great difference between these lakes, so that one is clear and beautiful and health-giving, full of happy fish and bird life, while the other is stagnant and foul and nearly lifeless? It is that the Lake of Galilee gives out freely the waters it receives, whilst the Dead Sea locks them up.

The Great Forgiveness of God cannot work in

the heart that will not forgive in turn. Because God's forgiveness is not merely letting folk off scot-free. That is a very cheap kind of forgiveness. It is God *giving* Himself *forth* to the soul that needs Him in its weakness and sin. Now God *is* Love, and the moment, therefore, that we refuse to be ourselves loving we shut Him out and also His forgiveness. The river of His love will not flow into our lives unless we let it flow out again to others.

I wish people knew the great joy that God has hidden in the heart of Great Forgiveness. Some day, perhaps, you may be called upon to forgive greatly—and revenge will whisper to you that it is happier, sweeter, not to forgive. Don't you believe it! It is not true. The unattractive casket called Forgiveness opens upon the purest joy of all—the fullness of God's presence in your heart.

Otto the First of Saxony was a just and good king who tried to serve God. He was called Otto the Lion for his courage, and he was Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, as it was called. He had a brother Henry, who three times had raised rebellion against him and twice had been forgiven and thrice defeated.

Now, at midnight Otto was celebrating his third victory, in the cathedral at Quedlinburg, when suddenly the church door burst open, and a man clad in a robe of penitence rushed into the church and flung himself at the feet of the emperor.

"O brother!" he cried; "O brother, forgive me." Otto looked at him coldly.

"Twice have I forgiven you, and I will not do so again. The decree has gone forth—you must die!"

A stillness as of death itself fell on the sacred building and every heart felt how the verdict clashed with the Holy Sacrament which they had just taken, eloquent with the mercy of God. But the Abbot picked up the Holy Book of God and, turning its pages, read solemnly:

"And Peter said unto him, 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?' Jesus saith unto him: 'I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.'"

Bursting into tears, Otto the Emperor embraced the prostrate form of his brother, raised him to his feet, and the sorrowful stillness of that assembly was broken with shouts and sobs of joy. We are never so near to God as when we truly forgive, and never ourselves more fully forgiven than when His love shows itself in our mercy. As Jesus said: *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."*

43

THE MAN WHO WASN'T CLEVER

JESUS had a fine sympathy for the person who was just "ordinary." He always regarded with respect the folk who, as we say, "do not get much of a show." So we find Him always teaching the importance of faithfulness in the little things of life and on the part of humble folk. Hence in His great and famous Story of the Talents the most important person in the story is not the man with five talents, but the man with only one.

Jesus likened the Kingdom of Heaven to a man who left his servants to trade with his goods whilst he went on a long journey. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to a third, one. The five-talented and two-talented men did well with their trust, and on their lord's return were able to show him his gift doubled. But the one-talented man turned sulky and hid his gift in the earth, wrapping it in a napkin. When his master returned he had nothing to offer him, therefore, but his one talent again. He tried to cover his unfaithfulness by blaming his master, saying that he knew him for a hard man who lived to get as much as possible out of other people, and so in fear of him he had buried his one talent. The master quickly showed this to be false and to be a mere excuse for idleness,

and he ordered the talent to be taken away from the unfaithful servant.

Then Jesus sums up the whole matter in this remarkable sentence, "*For unto every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*" We must not think that here Jesus is approving selfishness. He is simply warning us against the failure to use our possessions. In fact the word "use" would do very well in place of the word "hath" in this saying.

You know that if you fail to use your muscles they slowly lose their strength. Similarly, if people refuse to use their minds, and shirk every problem, they lose the power to think strongly and logically. If you will not "have" your talent you will lose it.

But there is real danger for the people of one talent. They often say: "Oh, I'm not clever. I can't do very much, nobody notices me—it's no good trying." Often they are envious of the five-talented people and they do not consider that if they did their best with one talent it might become two and then four and then six.

There is a fine story of two brothers who went out into the world to seek their fortune. One was very clever and made his way to the court of the king where by his wisdom he rose steadily till he became the nearest man to the king, his beloved favorite. The older brother had just two strong hands and arms, and decided to be a

blacksmith. So he built himself a little forge on the countryside, and there he earned his honest living, singing as he blew the fire and smote the iron.

One day news was brought to the king that another king had declared war upon him and was approaching the borders of his kingdom. The people clamored for the king to declare war too and march to battle. But the king's favorite, who was as good as he was wise, spoke up for Peace, and told the king how much easier it was to begin war than to finish it. "Besides," he said, "it may all be misunderstanding —it so often is. Sire, let me ride to the court of the other king, and see if I cannot make peace. If I do not return by sunrise on the third morning with news of Peace, then let your other councillors prevail and let it be war."

The king agreed, and off his messenger rode on the fleetest horse he possessed. He interviewed the enemy and found, as he had expected, that rumor had exaggerated the trouble, and Peace was all their desire as well as his. Back again he rode as hard as he could go. But storms delayed him, and bewildered by the lightning he lost his way in the forest, and finally his good horse cast a shoe. That last misfortune threatened to ruin his hopes of making Peace, but suddenly he heard the welcome sounds of a wayside forge and a voice singing:

"Cling, clang, cling; cling, clang, cling;
He who does his best is sure to serve the king."

THE BOY JESUS IN THE CARPENTER'S SHOP

As speedily as he could he made his way to the blacksmith and sought his aid. As the smith worked away at the horse's hoof in the glow of the firelight, the courtier recognized his brother and told him all the story. With rapid skill the damage was mended and the courtier sped on his way. At dawn on the third day the king mounted his battlements to see if his messenger was returning, and just as the sun topped the hills the cry arose: " He comes, he comes! " Like an arrow from a bow came the peacemaker on his fleet steed bringing his great news. When at last the king sought to reward him for his wise counsel and brave adventure, he did not forget his brother of the one talent and how much was owing to his simple faithfulness.

Remember, Jesus thinks a lot of just ordinary boys and girls!

44

THE MAN WHO FORGOT HIS SOUL

ARE you fond of money? I expect so. Most people are, and, as they think, for good reasons. Money buys food and clothes, sweets, and many other good things, and every boy and girl likes to have plenty of pocket money. But just because money has so great a power it is something about which we need to think very carefully. No wonder, then, that

Jesus had so much to say about it, and that He said some startling things about rich folk.

He tells us a story about a man who had "got on," as folk say, amazingly. Everything he touched seemed to turn to gold. *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.* We can see the fertile lands with our mind's eye. We can see the master, too. He is rubbing his hands with glee. His life's ambition is fulfilled already and he is saying to himself, "*What shall I do?*" This is the answer he gives to his own question: "*I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'*"

But that very night the voice of God spoke to him saying: "*Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee, and the things thou hast prepared whose shall they be?*" He had remembered his "soul" too late.

"*So,*" says Jesus, "*is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.*" It is a solemn warning for boys and girls as well as men and women, for it is when we are young that we are forming the habits of our later years. Now what was the Rich Fool's mistake? Surely it was to imagine that his soul—his real everlasting self—could be nourished on outside things. He had forgotten his soul so long that when at last he did remember it he thought it could be satisfied with the things that fatten the body!

The mind grows strong by thinking truly, the heart grows big by loving generously, the will grows strong by deciding bravely, and these three great powers are the soul. But if we are too busy attending to the things of the body and storing up material wealth far beyond our own immediate need, we have no time or strength left to make sure of the health and wealth of the soul—yet our soul lives on beyond our body! This rich man was a fool because he sold his soul for his body, which reminds me of the story Rev. G. H. Charnley tells of "The Bird that Sold Its Wings." Did you ever meet it? Here it is, in brief:

A little boy named Robert once came home from Sunday School looking very glum.

"I wish I had a fortune," he said. "I'd give anything for a fortune." Just then his mother came in and overheard what he said.

"Bobby, my boy," she said, "would you give *anything* for a fortune? Ah, Bobby," said his mother, "I don't think you could ever have heard the story of how the skylark sold his wings."

"Oh mother, do tell me," said Bobby. And his mother began:

"Once there lived a skylark who was the finest of his race. One day as he flew over a wood he looked down, and there, travelling over the wide road that ran through it, was the strangest little coach ever seen. It was painted black with yellow stripes, and was drawn by six horses as

black as pitch. But what interested him most was the fact that he saw sticking out of the windows of the coach the tails of some worms. Now, he was very fond of worms, and so he flew down to see what this thing might be, and as he drew nearer he heard the coachman calling out: 'Three fine, fat, juicy worms for two feathers. Who'll buy?'

"'That's cheap enough,' the skylark thought. 'I'd give anything for worms, especially big ones.' So he nibbled first at one wing and then at the other, and pulled a feather out of each, bought the worms and hurried away into a dark corner to eat them all by himself.

"Next day he saw the coach again and had another treat. And the next day, too. And the day after that, and the day after that. In fact, he grew fonder and fonder of worms. But oh! his wings. Soon he lost a sunward race in which he had always been first. Then he was only able to fly just above the trees, then not even as high as that. At last he could not fly at all, but could only hop about in the undergrowth, and he could sing no more because of the darkness and chilliness of the wood from which he could not escape.

"When things got as bad as this, he thought upon a good plan for making them better. He worked hard hunting worms and got a large heap of them by the roadside, and when the coach came along he cried to the coachman: 'Please sir, I have here a lot of worms: how many

feathers will you give me for them?' And, would you believe it, that hard-hearted coachman simply answered: 'My business is worms for feathers, not feathers for worms,' and he whipped up his horses and drove away. The poor, foolish little skylark rolled over and died of broken wings and a broken heart.

"When he was found, and the older skylarks saw what had happened they buried him in the wood by the roadside, and over his grave they placed a warning to all other birds, never, never, never to sell one feather of their wings for worms, or for anything else.

"And, Bobby," his mother continued, "Jesus said, *What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*"

Bobby had been following his mother's words carefully. He looked up at her when she ceased speaking.

"Mother," he said earnestly, "I think after all I would not give *anything* for a fortune."

45

THE LOST SON

THE loveliest story that Jesus ever told is known as the parable of the Prodigal Son, although the real hero of the story is the Father who is meant by Jesus to be a picture of God. You remember the story, I expect. A lad just

beginning to be a man felt that home was too dull for him—he wanted to be out in the world and to find adventures. So he asked his father for the portion of inheritance that belonged to him and then he left home.

The son made his way to a "far country," and there he simply wasted his inheritance in pleasure-seeking. There could only be one end to such folly and at last he found himself without a penny and no one would give him anything. Then he hired himself out to a farmer who set him to feed pigs—a horrible fate for a Jew!

After a time of bitter suffering, he remembered with awful longing his good father's home, where even the servants were better off than he was now!

So a great resolution took shape in his heart to go home and tell his father of his shame and repentance for all his folly, and he would ask his father not for a son's place—he had forfeited that forever, he felt—but to be allowed to remain in his own home as a humble servant.

So home he went, but his father had never ceased to watch for his home-coming since the first day he had left, and "whilst he was yet a great way off, his father *raced,*" that is the word Jesus used, "and fell on his neck and kissed him." You can see the dear old man running as hard as he could for fear his boy might change his mind! It was such a reception as the prodigal had never dreamed of. He tried to

stammer out his request to be only a servant, but before he could finish it—his father was calling loudly to his servants to put the best robe on this son of his and a ring upon his finger and to kill the fatted calf and "let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

But the elder brother didn't see it like that. He forgot what his brother had suffered, he did not know how deep and true was his brother's repentance, that he had not come home to be a son but a servant merely, he remembered only his folly and would not forgive him. The story ends with a picture of that tender forgiving father pleading gently but firmly with the elder brother and saying again with a ring of gladness in his voice, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

What do you think of the story? Its great lesson is that however far, or little, we may wander from God there is always a way back, and loving forgiveness and a tender, understanding welcome for us, and that it is a terrible thing to stand in the way, as the elder brother did, of any son returning to the Father.

When you are older you will read one day, I hope, *The Bonnie Brier Bush,* by Ian Maclaren, a book of tender Scotch stories, records from real life. Amongst them you will find the story of Flora Campbell. You will read of the motherless girl's foolish flight from her simple Scotch

home and the bitter sorrow in the heart of her old father Lachlan Campbell. But Lachlan had a faithful friend in old Margaret Howe and she wrote a wonderful letter to Flora.

Let Flora herself tell the history of that letter. "It wass a beautiful night in London, but I will be thinking that there iss no living person caring whether I live or die, for there is nothing so hopeless as to hef no friend in a great city. Millions and millions of people, and not one to say 'Flora,' and not one sore heart if I died that night. Then a strange thing happened: I crept into the shadow of a church and wept. But there wass singing, oh yes, and beautiful too, for the dark church was open, and the light was falling over my head, then I knew that there was service in the church. So I went in and sat down at the door. The sermon was on the Prodigal Son, but there iss only one word I remember. 'You are not forgotten or cast off,' the preacher said, 'you are missed,' and then he will come back to it again, and it was always 'missed, missed, missed!'

"I slipped out into the darkness and cried, 'Father,' but I could not go back, and I knew not what to do. But this wass ever in my ear, 'missed,' and I wass wondering if God will be thinking of me. 'Perhaps there may be a sign,' I said, and I went to my bedroom, and I saw the letter. It wass not long before I will be in the train, and all the night I held your letter in my hand, and when I was afraid I will read,

'Your father loves you more than efer,' and I will say, 'This iss my warrant.' Oh yes, and God was very good to me, and I did not want for friends all the way home."

So you see, boys and girls, the beautiful story Jesus told is still bringing the prodigal back to the Father. If you ever wander will you remember and come back, and if you ever meet any one who is trying to return, don't stand in their way, will you, but help them all you can!

46

THE STORY OF THE BRIDESMAIDS

EVERYBODY loves a wedding! So did Jesus, and one of His cleverest stories is about bridesmaids. Have you ever been a bridesmaid? At this marriage there were ten bridesmaids, and with the little lamps they carry in the East at night, they waited for the bridegroom's coming. When he arrived they would escort their bride into the marriage-feast. But this bridegroom kept them waiting until midnight! Then the cry arose, "Behold he cometh!" At this point five of the bridesmaids made a sad discovery. Their lamps were without oil—they had forgotten it! In great distress they begged a little from the other five, but these were afraid of running short if they gave any away, and it would be dreadful if there were no lamps at all to light the bride upon her way!

So the five foolish girls, having no time to run to the store, were shut out of the marriage feast. How unhappy they must have felt, and yet how foolish they were to be unready after all!

Are you ever unready? There was once an English monarch who earned the saddest nickname ever given to a king—he was called Ethelred the Unready! But to be unready for the best thing of all! Unready for the coming of Christ to your soul, for that is what the parable means. That is saddest of all. And nobody can get ready for you! Just as you cannot laugh for somebody else, or sneeze for somebody else, neither can you believe in Jesus Christ for somebody else. It cannot be done any more than the five virgins could share the oil with their unwise sisters.

It is *your* decision, *your* love, *your* faithfulness, that Jesus wants, and nobody else but you can give these.

The great poet, James Russell Lowell, has put into poetry the ancient legend of Rhœcus. A youth named Rhœcus wandering in a wood, discovered a dryad—the goddess of an oak tree. Held breathless by her beauty, he heard his name breathed softly, and the goddess said:

> *"Ask me what thou wilt, that I can give,*
> *And with a thankful joy it shall be thine."*

Rhœcus, with great but reverent boldness, asked for her love.

" I give it, Rhœcus, though a perilous gift.
An hour before the sunset meet me here."

Such was the goddess's wonderful reply, and before Rhœcus could say more she had disappeared. Then the poet says:

" Young Rhœcus had a faithful heart enough,
But one that in the present dwelt too much;
So haply meeting in the afternoon
Some comrades who were playing . . .
He joined them, and forgot all else."

Slowly the afternoon passed to dusk, and still Rhœcus was playing. A yellow bee flew about his head buzzing earnestly, but Rhœcus beat it off—three times it came, then flew wounded away. But as it flew Rhœcus' gaze followed it, and he saw

" A sharp mountain peak of Thessaly
Against the red disk of the setting sun."

Rhœcus fled from his companions, and rushed madly down the road, and back to the woods, but he was " too late."

" Quite spent and out of breath, he reached the tree.
Then sighed the voice, ' O Rhœcus! nevermore
Shalt thou behold me or by day or night;
Me, who would fain have blessed thee with a love
More ripe and bounteous than ever yet
Filled up with nectar any mortal heart;
But thou didst scorn my humble messenger! "

There is a sense, boys and girls, in which we can say that it is both *always* "too late," and *never* "too late" to come to Christ. Always, because whenever you discover Christ as your Saviour you will say to yourself, "This is so lovely, how I wish I had come before! Why did I waste precious years without knowing Him as I know Him now?" Some souls have had to say that with a great and bitter sense of loss, because they have put off coming to Christ till quite late in life, and nothing and nobody could ever make up to them for that loss. Yet also it is *never* "too late," because "him that cometh unto me"—says Jesus—"I will in no wise cast out." You can come at once—if the "oil of faith" is in your lamp—and no one can give you that—it is the work of your own choice and decision. Do not be too late for the Best. "Behold the bridegroom cometh." Welcome Him with your whole heart and soul and mind and strength. Decide once for all, and be ever faithful to Him.

47

THE TWO SONS

ONE of the shortest stories that Jesus told us is at the same time one of the most important. It is so short that I will give it in the very words of Our Lord.

"But what think ye? A man had two sons: and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.' And he answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterwards he repented himself and went. And he came to the second son and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' and went not. Whither of the twain did the will of his father?"

Jesus was thinking here of God as the father, of the Pharisees as the second brother, full of lip-service to God but empty of the true obedience of life, and of many of the common folk as the first brother—empty of lip-service and of the outward forms of religion but often trying hard to do what was right. These latter were despised by the Pharisees and other religious leaders, but in the opinion of Jesus they were the truer children of God.

We all need, boys and girls, to escape the sad mistake of thinking that worship can take the place of service. It never can, any more than to *tell* Mother you love her whilst you never *do* anything for her can take the place of silent ready obedience.

So if we had to choose between these two sons we should prefer the one who *did* rather than the one who only *said,* the right thing. Do we know what it is to take part in worship and yet never think of what it means for our everyday conduct? Jesus did not believe that worship of that kind was of any use. Worship without service, praise without obedience, avail nothing

for the soul. "Then shall I say unto them, 'I never knew you—depart from me.'"

There is a Japanese legend of a great bell that was wanted for a temple—it was in the days when glass was unknown—and all the women of the city were asked to give their bronze mirrors to be melted down to make the temple bell. The mirrors that were brought were of all kinds, large and small, wide and narrow, costly and cheap—they were cast into a place within railings in the temple courtyard. A farmer's wife threw her mirror in—it was engraved on the back with a pine tree, a bamboo tree, and a plum tree flower. But this woman did not want to give it. She kept going to the railings and looking with wistful longing eyes, and her heart took it back, if her hand could not.

At last the mirrors were taken to the foundry to be melted in the furnace. Now and then a man would push a long ladle into the bubbling mass to see if it were melted. But one piece remained hard—a mirror marked with a pine, a bamboo, and a plum flower. Again and again he threw it back into the furnace, but nothing would make it melt and blend with all the rest. At last he carried it back to the priests at the temple. "The heart of the giver," said the oldest priest, "did not go with the gift. She was not sincere. Let it be cast out."

The legend serves to remind us that we can never deceive God. He knows always whether or not our "heart" is in our offering of worship or

of gift. But there is one further thing to be said about this parable. Whilst it shows us that Jesus prefers the "doer" to the mere "hearer" or "talker," yet we may be quite sure that what He really wants from us is not one or the other but *both.* The ideal son would have said to his father "I go," and he would have gone. Jesus once said this wonderful thing: The true worshippers shall worship the Father "in spirit and in truth: *for the Father seeketh such to worship him,*" so evidently He wants us to worship. But He also said, "Not every one that saith Lord! Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father."

Let us make up our minds to do *both,* to serve God with our *speech,* in promise, prayer, and praise, and with our *deeds,* doing always the things that please the Father.

48

THE STORY OF THE JUDGMENT

IS there any time quite so merry as Christmas? Why at that time is every one so happy and kind? Although many people do not realize it, the real deep reason is in the lovely meaning of Christmas—the birth of Christ—the Coming of the True King to rule all hearts with Love.

But this deepest root of all our Christmas Joy

Jesus wants us to have for every day and all the time. If we would let Him, He would make Christmas-all-the-year-round for us! For He tells us in one of His finest stories—the story of the Judgment—that He is continually coming to us, in the need of others' lives. Perhaps you remember the solemn word-picture that He drew. The Son of Man seated on the throne of His glory with all the holy angels about Him and all the nations of the earth assembled before Him. The Great Judge separates the people to the right and to the left. Those on His right hand He bids enter the Heavenly Kingdom, for "when I was hungry, sick, naked, in prison, ye fed me, visited me, ministered unto me!" "When saw we *thee* hungry, or sick, or in prison?" they cry with astonishment. Back comes the thrilling answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto *one of the least* of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

But to those on His left He utters words of doom, because "when I was hungry, sick, naked, or in prison, ye did not feed me, visit me, minister unto me." But they, too, cry with astonishment, "When saw we *thee* hungry, or sick, or in prison and did *not* minister unto thee!" And this time the answer is the voice of Judgment, "Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

Thus did the great Lord of Glory claim to be present in your life and mine in the person of any one in need of our love and help.

Do you know Tolstoy's wonderful little story built on this parable? Tolstoy calls it, "Where Love is, God is." It tells of an old cobbler named Martin who lived in a tiny basement room, the one window of which looked out on the street. Through it one could not see much more than the feet of the passers-by, but old Martin could recognize nearly everybody simply by their boots.

Martin was an old man, and at this time he began to think more about his soul and God. He had the bitter sorrow of losing his dear wife and his son in death, and he lost all sense of joy in life. But then he met a holy man who advised him to read the gospels if he would learn to live for God instead of for his own happiness. So Martin began.

At first he only meant to read in holidays, but having once begun he found it made his heart so light that he read every day. From that time old Martin's life was changed. His selfishness could not stand before the unselfishness of Jesus but simply had to be given up.

One night he fell asleep saying to himself, "If the Lord came to me, how should I treat Him?" Suddenly he heard a voice: "Martin!" He started from his sleep. "Who's there?" he cried. Then he heard, quite distinctly, "Martin! Look out into the street to-morrow, for I shall come." How excited Martin was as he realized that the Lord had spoken to him!

Next morning he was up early and tidied his

little room before settling down to his work—his mind full of his coming Guest. His gaze kept darting to the window, and presently he caught sight of an old soldier named Stepanitch trying to clear away the snow. "I must be going crazy with age," said Martin laughing at his fancy. "Stepanitch comes to clear away the snow, and I must needs imagine it's Christ come to visit me, old dotard that I am."

Yet presently he looked again, and now the old man was leaning against the wall, quite worn out with the work and the bitter cold. "I will call him in and give him some tea," cried Martin, and straightway beckoned to the old man. "May God bless you," Stepanitch said. "My bones do ache, to be sure." He came in, first scraping off the snow, and, lest he should leave marks on the floor, he began wiping his feet; but as he did so he tottered and nearly fell. "Don't trouble to wipe your feet," said Martin. "I'll wipe the floor—it's all in the day's work!"

Whilst old Stepanitch drank glass after glass of the warm tea Martin told him that he was expecting the Lord Christ, and so lovingly did he speak, quoting the very words of Jesus, that tears at last poured down the old soldier's cheeks. As he rose to go he said: "Thank you, Martin. You have given me food and comfort both for soul and body."

Later in the day Martin again invited some one into his little shop.

This time it was a poor woman and her baby.

He caught sight of her standing against the wall trying to wrap the baby up against the bitter wind but with scarcely anything to wrap the poor child in.

Martin insisted on her coming in and having some warm milk and soup, and before his visitors departed, he gave her an old cloak to wrap the baby in. "The Lord bless you, friend!" she cried. "Surely Christ must have sent me to your window, else the child would have been frozen." "It is quite true," said Martin smiling, "it was He made me do it. Take this for Christ's sake," he went on, and put a coin into her thin hand.

Still the old cobbler sat and watched the window wondering when the Lord would come. Presently he saw an old apple woman carrying a double load—a big basket of apples and sack full of chips. While she rested the basket on the ground a boy suddenly snatched at one of the apples, but the old woman caught him. Then began a fierce struggle. The old woman scolded, the boy screamed. Old Martin dropped his awl and hurried out to them. "Let him go, Granny," he cried. "He won't do it again. Let him go for Christ's sake." She did so and then he asked the boy to beg forgiveness. This he did in his turn. "That's right," said Martin, "now here's an apple for you. I will pay you, Granny." "You will spoil them that way. The young rascals, they ought to be whipped," she said. "Oh, Granny!" said Martin, "that's

our way—but it's not God's way. If he should be whipped for stealing an apple, what should be done to us for our sins!" At last they went off together, the boy carrying the old granny's basket for her.

Martin sat on in the little shop, the dusk deepening its shadows about him. Presently a voice whispered, "Martin! Martin!" "Who is it?" cried the old man, trembling in excitement. "It is I," said the voice, and out of a dark corner stepped Stepanitch, who smiled and vanished again. "It is I," said the voice again, and out of the darkness stepped the woman and her baby child. The woman laughed, and the baby smiled, and they too vanished. "It is I," said the voice once more, and the old apple woman and the boy stepped out and smiled and vanished.

Martin's soul grew strangely glad within him. He put on his spectacles, and began reading the gospel just where he had opened it. Right at the top of the page he read: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger, and ye took me in." And Martin understood that his dream had come true, and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had welcomed Him.

So Martin found out how to have Christmas-all-the-year-round.

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